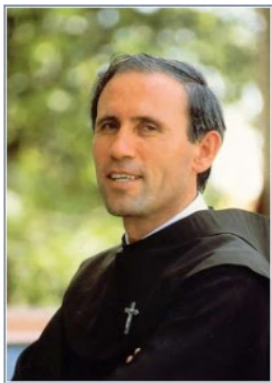


Medjugorje Spiritual Guides, New Age Spiritism and Global Liberalism

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

THE PRIESTS WHO ACTED AS ADVISORS and spiritual guides of the Medjugorje seers present a host of problems for the authenticity of supernatural events that reportedly happened and continue to happen there. As pointed out in [Article Five](#), their disobedience and sexual activity do *not* bode well for the authenticity of supernatural claims made by the “seers”. The themes of *disobedience*, *sexual aberrance*, and a new wrinkle – cultic *New Age Spirituality* – will be examined in the current article wherein another Franciscan Friar, Spiritual Director, and Confidant of the “seers”, Father Tomislav Vlastic, is examined for all three of these transgressions.



Father Tomislav Vlastic

Tomislav Vlastic (born 1942), is a laicized Catholic priest who was formerly a member of the Franciscan Order, from Bosnia-Herzegovina and spiritual director of the seers of Medjugorje. Although ordained in 1969, by 1976, while still a priest, Vlastic became sexually involved with a Roman Catholic nun named Sister Rufina whom he impregnated and then sent away to Germany with the ardent request to keep their pregnancy secret. The child Toni was born in Germany on January 25, 1977. **Sister Rufina** kept their secret but nonetheless, in a series of

intercepted letters to her lover, she could not restrain herself. Unfortunately for Vlasic, the letters found their way to the *Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith* headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who kept them concealed until 1984.

Meanwhile, in 1981 Father Vlasic attended an International Charismatic Meeting in Rome during which it was prophesied that, with the help of the Virgin Mary, he would lead a “multitude of people” from a place from which came forth “rivers of water.”

Following this charismatic jolt, within two months after the apparitions began at Medjugorje (July, 1981), Vlasic without permission from his Ordinary, abandoned his formal assignment in Capljina and headed for Medjugorje where he quickly became the “Spiritual Director” of the alleged visionaries, [a fact that Vlasic boasted of in a letter to Pope John Paul II](#). Thus, according to the Chancellor of the Diocese of Mostar:

“In a letter dated 13 April 1984. Vlasic represented (himself to) the Pope as the one “who through divine providence guides the seers of Medjugorje“.

Congruent with this new spiritual responsibility, Vlasic quickly went to work compiling the “Parish Chronicle” detailing the apparitions and appended messages from Our Lady. Although he did not begin the Chronicles until October, he back-dated them to August 11, 1981.

Then, in July of 1982, the Franciscan Provincial recommended that Fr. Vlašić be *formally assigned* as the “spiritual assistant in Medjugorje”. Bishop Žanić, ignorant of Fr. Vlašić’s sexual aberrations, accepted the request on July 27, 1982, and officially installed him as a priest in his diocese assigned as Associate Pastor in Medjugorje.

It was not long until it became apparent to Bishop Žanić that Father Vlasic posed a unique challenge. In 1984, under pressure from the same bishop, a bishop who referred to him as a [“mystifier and charismatic magician”](#), Vlašić was transferred to Vitina. From here, Father

Vlasic [composed a strange letter to a friend at the Vatican](#) (perhaps to an equally strange cleric named Bishop Hnilica-discussed elsewhere) in which he complained about Bishop Zanic and called for a concerted effort against him:

“It would be necessary to get all the others involved (intellectuals, theologians, bishops, cardinals...). We have to admit that Satan can also work through the structures of the Church.”

It is unclear if Fr. Vlasic, whom the bishop had called a “magus”, was referring to “*all the others*” as a conjured cabal of “intellectuals, theologians, bishops, cardinals” who had perhaps penetrated the Vatican (as commonly reported), it is unclear if he was referring to them as “Satan” or if he was referring to the regular members of the Vatican bureaucracy as Satan- typical double speak, which betrays the command given by Jesus Christ to speak plainly warning that anything else is from the devil:

“Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one” ([Matt 5:37](#)).

If Vlasic is employing “double speak”, given what is known of him discussed below, it can be surmised what side of the equation he is on and to whom he is referring by the clause, “*all the others*”, which also makes it clear how “Satan” can “work through the structures of the Church.” Nonetheless, after several years in Vitina, Vlasic departed for Parma, Northern Italy (1987), with **another woman who is also a supposed “seer”**, by the name of **Agnes Heupel** (Sister Rufina is raising their child without a father and Fra Vlasic is with another woman) who was to become **Co-Founder of a gender-mixed religious community, which the two named *Kraljice mira, potpuno smo tvoji. Po Mariji k Isusu*** (“Queen of Peace, we are all yours: to Jesus through Mary”). This community received a boon when one of the Medjugorje seers, Marija Pavlovic, came to live with them in community and to experience her daily apparitions there. Eventually, [Marija even endorsed their endeavor with a statement composed on March 8, 1987](#) in which she stated:

*'This is God's plan... As you can see, **the Madonna has given the community its programme: 'Kraljice mira, potpuno smo tvoji. Po Mariji k Isusu' and is guiding this community through Fr. Tomislav and Agnes, while sending messages through her to the community**' (Agnes is a medium).*

However, on July 11, 1988, after the local bishop of Parma (who considered cohabitation between men and women as, "totally unrelated to any form of religious community accepted by the Church") ordered the gender-mixed community closed, [Marija quickly retracted her statement with another](#) in which she admits to lying while simultaneously hinting at coercion ([full statement](#)).

*"From the text and testimonies which [bear my signature](#) it follows that the Madonna communicated to me that the community and the program of Father Tomislav V. and Agnes Heupel are the way God intended for me and the rest of us. **Now I repeat that I have never received from the Madonna, nor have I given to Father Tomislav V., not to any other individual, any such approval or instructions from the Madonna.***

*"My first declaration, as published in Croatian and Italian, does not correspond to the truth. I personally had no desire to give any sort of written declaration. **Father Tomislav V. kept suggesting to me, stressing over and over again, that I as a seer should write the declaration** which the world was waiting for.*

["Before God, before the Madonna and the Church of Jesus Christ.](#) Everything that can be understood as a confirmation or approval of this Work of Fr. Tomislav and Agnes Heupel, on the part of the Madonna through me, absolutely does not correspond to the truth and furthermore the idea that I had a spontaneous desire to write down this testimony is also not true."

By the time the bishop of Parma ordered the community closed, Vlašić had already founded houses in four other dioceses, including one at Medjugorje, which was built in 1995 without permission or recognition by the local bishop. Fra Vlasic pulled this off with the help of yet **another laywoman and supposed “seer”, Stefania Caterina**, who in **2002** became the Vice-President of “Queen of Peace”, a growing New Age Confederation (as detailed below).

Characterized by suspicious relationships, marred by New Age mysticism, seers, and sexual aberrations, it is not surprising that in **2008** the [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) informed Fr. Vlašić that he was now the subject of investigation

*“...for the diffusion of **dubious doctrine, manipulation of consciences, suspected mysticism, disobedience towards legitimately issued orders**” and charges of **sexual misconduct** (“contra sextum”).*

On August 31 of the same year, the [CDF operating through the Bishop of Mostar](#) informed Vlasic that he had incurred the “censure of interdict *latae sententiae*“. Consequently, the CDF imposed the following sanctions: Fr Vlasic was

- (1) To be confined to the Franciscan monastery in Lombardy
- (2) To take a course in spiritual formation
- (3) To cease associating with the Queen of Peace confederation,
- (4) To refrain from juridical contracts or acts of administration, and
- (5) To cease from preaching, spiritual direction, making public statements, and practicing the sacrament of confession, under pain of incurring the penalty of automatic [interdict](#) barring him from performing any of the sacraments.

Some Medjugorje devotees have endeavored to distance F. Vlasic’s errance from Medjugorje by stressing that these penalties were incurred *after* he left Medjugorje (and therefore have nothing to do with Medjugorje). It is important to note that this argument is specious due to the fact that the CDF clearly specified that these charges and penalties were imposed:

“...within the context of the phenomenon of Medjugorje”

Moreover, in the sentence just prior to the adumbration of the foregoing penalties, the CDF stated Fr. Vlastic **“is”**, not **“was”** involved with Medjugorje –

*“The Decree of the Congregation mentions that Rev. Fr. Tomislav Vlašić, a cleric of the Franciscan Minor Order – the founder of the association ‘Kraljice mira potpuno Tvoji – po Mariji k Isusu’ and **who is** (not was) **involved in the “phenomenon Medjugorje”** – has been reported to the Congregation.”*

That was Aug. 31, 2008; eleven months later, July 31, 2009, [The General Minister of the Franciscan Order](#) issued further penalties, which were imposed,

*“As a salutary penal precept – **under the pain of excommunication** which the Holy See would declare, and if necessary, without prior canonical warning – the following precepts are imposed on Mr. Tomislav Vlastic:*

a) Absolute prohibition from exercising any form of apostolate (for example, promoting public or private devotion, teaching Christian doctrine, spiritual direction, participation in lay associations, etc.) as well as of acquiring and administering goods intended for pious purposes;

b) Absolute prohibition from releasing declarations on religious matters, especially regarding the “phenomenon of Medjugorje”;

c) Absolute prohibition from residing in houses of the Order of Friars Minor.

Pope Benedict XVI laicised Father Tomislav in 2009. **He was also placed**

under the pain of *ex-communication*, if he should violate any of [the following stipulations](#):

“Absolute prohibition from exercising any form of apostolate (for example, promoting public or private devotion, teaching Christian doctrine, spiritual direction, participation in lay associations, etc.)” and “Absolute prohibition from releasing declarations on religious matters, especially regarding the “phenomenon of Medjugorje” .

Habitually accustomed to disobedience, it is not surprising that Vlastic, now a layman, has chosen to ignore and disobey even these severe prohibitions. Along with Ms. Stefania Caterina, he continues to give spiritual direction, to publicly preach, to teach about Medjugorje (he built a Queen of Peace House there in 1985), to participate in lay associations and to promote private devotions as contained in at least 30 of their video products available in several languages on their [video channel](#) and contained in almost every [article available on their website](#). Especially egregious and heretical is their promotion of alien beings and an advanced group of avatars known as the *“Central Nucleus”* which is a code name for the New Age realm of *Shamballah*:

Stefania Caterina and Tomislav Vlastic members of “Central Nucleus” with Statue of Lady of Medjugorje (Queen of Peace) in background.

From the Video:

Caterina [08:11]: “We want to tell you clearly that **both Tomislav Vlašić and I belong to the *Central Nucleus***. We have been called to this task more than ten years ago. Of course we could not reveal it because then the Lord had to fix so many pieces in a very large mosaic, concerning not only Earth but the entire universe.”

*“Jesus said clearly that it is a small number of people. We do not go over 50 in number. Indeed, **we are 49 to be exact.** And why? **Because the Central Nucleus is divided into seven nuclei.** Seven nuclei, **at the head of which is one of the seven great archangels.** [...] [17:24] People who are part of it come from **different mankinds, not only from Earth** (that is, they come from other planets). Moreover, those of us who come from Earth are very few [she smiles-that makes she and Vlastic very special entities]. And they come from other mankinds of the universe. Some of them are dead.”*

***Vlastic** [21:33]: “We can talk about some mankinds in the universe, who have remained faithful to God: they form a nucleus, all the people are a nucleus. But in this large nucleus there are many small nuclei, which move similarly to the Central Nucleus. They move, and at the same time the people provide the best nuclei for the **mission in the whole universe**, and these hook to the Central Nucleus. Thus, since early this year, these three instruments are working: the **pure spirits**, the **Central Nucleus**, and **brothers and sisters faithful to God**, who have been faithful to God from the beginning of creation.”*

This is basically the esoteric [Thesophy of Alice Bailey](#) in the vernacular. Bailey devoted her life to preparing disciples to work with “ascended masters” for the good of humanity:

*“The Plan for humanity requires the cooperation and service of trained and dedicated human beings intelligently informed about world affairs, in collaboration with those who form the **spiritual Hierarchy**, the inner government of the planet (who work with more advanced beings who govern the solar system and galaxy.*

Caterina wrote about her experiences and messages she received from extra-terrestrial beings in her book [“Beyond the Great](#)

[Barrier](#)" (2008). Her experiences began in 1984, with a being named "[Ashtar Sheran](#) commander of interplanetary fleet from the planet [Alpha Centauri](#); she also introduces her readers to Sheran's wife, Kalna, to the priest-king Aris and others from Alpha Centauri. Odd as this might seem, [Caterina boldly asserts her Catholic and Marian identity](#):

*"I believe in God and I offer Him my life, through the **Immaculate Heart of Mary**. I am Italian and a **practising Catholic**. Extraordinary experiences have always been part of my life. Since childhood, God has granted me the gift of being able to communicate with Him in a special manner, by means of visions and interior locutions."*

"I believe it is my duty to obey Jesus' wishes, bearing witness to what I was able to see and listen to. If I failed to do this, living in fear of human judgement, I would be denying the Lord and His life within me."

These experiences have come about through interior locutions and visions, during which explanations were given to me by the Lord himself or by His instruments, first among which, Saint Raphael archangel. I received many explanations from the souls of Purgatory regarding their state, and from men of other planets regarding the universe and the life that is present within it."

"I did not learn these things from anyone. I did not use methods, nor did I consult any books. I never contacted mediums. For me there is only one Mediator, Jesus Christ."

Immaculate Heart of Mary, practicing Catholic, Jesus Christ, sound good, but who is this Jesus she refers to?

According to New Age theosophy, there are Seven Kohans who rule the

solar system underneath a New Age Trinity which is the universal manifestation of the eternal God. These seven Kohans are known by various other names, such as: 'the seven Spirits before the throne', 'the seven solar Deities', 'the primordial Seven', 'the seven Builders', 'the seven Manus', 'Flames' or 'Ray Lords'. It is their responsibility to **direct the solar evolution of consciousness** by use of the seven rays that emanate from the Trinity. Each of the seven major planets receives one of the seven rays and directs their divine influence throughout the solar system. Each of the seven rays are overseen by the seven 'Ray Lords' who teach disciples to walk along the Seven Paths to God.

The earth is considered a minor planet; it is ruled by a being known as '[Sanat Kumara](#)' or the '[Ancient of Days](#)', 'the One in Whom we move and live and have our being', 'the Light of the World', 'the Eternal Youth' and 'the God of Love'. He is the "Ancient of Days" of Judaism and Christianity, Skanda/Kartikkeya in Hinduism, Brahma-**Sanam Kumar** in Buddhism, the Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism etc. Sanat is considered to be the saviour of mankind and the light of the world.

Although Hinduism, Judaism *et al* and New Age Theosophists, like Madame Blavatsky, Alice Bailey, C.W. Leadbeater and Elizabeth Clare Prophet all have different versions of New Age [cosmology](#) (structure and development of the universe) and [cosmogony](#) (origin of the universe), New Age thinkers share a basic schema – the schema for planet earth looks something like this:

The ruler of this planet is Sanat Kumara, beneath him are a trinity of highly evolved but lesser beings, analogues to the higher solar trinity (of a higher god, the "solar logos whose body is that of the entire solar system), known as the "Buddhas of Activity" or Pratyeka Buddha's. Along with Sanat, **they receive the seven divine energies and distribute them throughout the earth to stimulate the evolution of human consciousness.**

According to [Alice A. Bailey](#), along with Sanat Kumara, they form a governing council that conducts business in a palatial room known as '*The Council Chamber of the Lord of the World*'. Here Sanat meets

with Maitreya, the Ascended Masters of Ancient Wisdom such as Maha Chohan and the **Master Jesus et al** to assess their efforts at mind control through use the seven energy rays that pass through the air waves, what they refer to as assisting humanity to achieve higher levels of consciousness. The **Great Council** is also known as '**Shamballa**' or the "Heaven of Earth" (*The New Age Dictionary*, p. 172).

Shamballa, constructed by Sanat Kumara, is thought to reside on the "fourth etheric plane" of the planet earth floating above the Gobi Desert. Each planet has seven planes of existence within a spectrum that extends from pure spirit to densest matter. The etheric plane is more ethereal than the lower planes of raw matter, liquid and gas. The beings that reside on the etheric plane are highly evolved human beings who have shed their physical bodies. Together with Sanat Kumara and the Buddha's of activity, they form a governing council that resides on Shamballa.

The Council consists of "Department Heads" who oversee three diverse yet integral departments:

First Department-Department of the Will: Overseen by a being named '**Manu**' who works out the will and purpose of Sanat Kumara by directing the energies that effect the human will concerned with planetary government and politics

Second Department-Love and Wisdom: Overseen by the '**Bodhisattva**' also known as the '*Christ*', the 'World Teacher' or the '*Lord Maitreya*', the Teacher of mankind and of angels as well. He is the expression of love whose mission it is to develop consciousness by directing the energies that effect the religions of the world.

Third Department – Intelligence: Overseen by the '**Mahachohan**' or *Lord of Civilization* who is responsible to direct the energies affecting the social and financial centers of the world

Below these three departments are **seven major esoteric schools or 'ashrams'**, (the seven spoken of by Vlasic and Caterina) each led by a planetary Chohan. Under these seven *major ashrams* are forty-nine *minor ashrams*, led by [Ascended Masters](#) (the number given above by Caterina)

who are working through select disciples known as 'Masters of Wisdom' to teach and form high ranking adepts (Vlasic and Caterina) to become 'Masters of Wisdom' themselves, masters who assist human beings to become more spiritual and "Christlike" (*not* Jesus Christ but Christ the Ascended Master who resides at Shamballa).

"The ascended masters help us become aware of the Paths back to the Source. Paths that we can walk over to master the seven rays of our Christ consciousness that emerge from the white light."

"The seven rays present seven paths to individual or personal Christhood. Seven masters have mastered identity by walking these paths, defined as the seven archetypes of Christhood. These particular ascended masters are called the chohans of the rays, which means lords of the rays. Chohan is a Sanskrit term for lord, and lord is equivalent to law; hence the chohan is the action of the law of the ray."

To be a Chohan on one of the seven rays means that this master defines the law on that ray; through him the energy of that ray emanating from the higher "Solar Logos" flows to mankind, to all who are evolving on that particular path.

As stated by Caterina: "Jesus said clearly that it (*Central Nucleus*) is a small number of people."

"We do not go over 50 in number. Indeed, we are 49 to be exact (7 in each of the seven Ashrams, thus totaling 49). And why? Because the Central Nucleus is divided into seven nuclei. Seven nuclei, at the head of which is one of the seven great archangels."

What Caterina presents as a teaching of "Jesus" is in accord with [theosophical teaching about the ashrams](#): Thus, according to [T. Subba Row](#) there are different types of Adepts, corresponding to the [Seven Rays](#) of the Logos:

“In the adept hierarchy, there are always seven classes of adepts, corresponding to the seven rays of the Logos.”

The adepts are **advanced human beings** who have **put themselves into contact with, and under the influence of**, more advanced Cosmic Beings, Angels and Ascended Masters who together with them constitute a ruling planetary (and solar) brotherhood:

*“The Spiritual Hierarchy serving the Earth is made up of Cosmic Beings, Angels, and Ascended Masters. Ascended Masters are individuals who have attained the Victory of the Ascension (6th initiation) and are in “Heaven” (the upper Divine Octaves-Shamballa). The Great White Brotherhood, also known as the Brotherhood of Light, is made up of these, **as well as their unascended disciples** (and **adepts** in the lower octaves (lower planes or levels).”*

Without going into ever more cumbersome detail, **Vlasic and Caterina have simply put New Age Theosophy into Christian terms to better communicate esotericism to Christians foolish enough to listen to them.** Thus, the Cohans are called Archangels while *Shamballah* is referred to as the “*Central Nucleus*“. The Seven Cohans or Archangels are Ascended Masters who along with their 49 most advanced students form the “Central Nucleus” which are really seven “Ashrams” or esoteric schools composed of highly developed New Age disciples preparing for their next initiation.

Above the Central Nucleus is a divine being known as Sanat Kumara (Lucifer or the “Planetary Logos”). The Central Nucleus is the sacred dwelling through which the seven divine rays link the human mind and the human planet to the angelic mind of Sanat Kumara across a mystical bridge known in New Age lore as the “*antahkarana*” formed by prayer and meditation.

“Kumara is an “Advanced Being” at the [Ninth level of initiation](#) who is regarded as the ‘Lord’ or ‘Regent’ of [Earth](#) and of the [humanity](#), and is thought to be the head of the [Spiritual Hierarchy](#) of Earth

who dwells in [Shamballah](#) (also known as 'The City of Enoch')...Shamballah is a hidden land inhabited by a [hidden mystic brotherhood](#) whose members labor for the good of humanity. [Alice A. Bailey](#) claims Shamballa (her spelling) is an extra-dimensional or spiritual reality on the [etheric plane](#), a spiritual centre where the governing [deity](#) of [Earth](#), [Sanat Kumara](#), dwells as the highest [Avatar](#) of the Planetary [Logos](#) of Earth, and is said to be an expression of the Will of God" (Bailey, Alice A, A Treatise on Cosmic Fire 1932 Lucis Trust. 1925, p 753).

Sanat Kumara is the founder of the Spiritual Hierarchy also known as the *Great Brotherhood of Light*, the *Great White Lodge*, or [Great White Brotherhood](#) of which, according to New Age Theosophy, Jesus is a part *albeit* at a lower rank of existence. As head of the Spiritual Hierarchy, *Sanat Kumara* is also known as the Ancient of Days. He is also one of the seven holy Kumaras who represent the seven rays on Venus. He supposedly came to the earth eons ago with a group of 144,000 spiritual beings to enlighten the earth during her darkest hours, a time when virtually all human being had turned their backs on God. Sanat long ago returned to the planet Venus. According to the ancient teachings, other Kumaras such as Guatama Buddha have also incarnated to assist humanity; Buddha was followed in succession by the Lord Maitreya and (then by) **Jesus**.

Jesus Christ is himself, just an **Ascended Master** – a man who became **divine** – a highly evolved human being who has passed through at least [four initiations](#) on his way to Godhead. According to Bailey,

*"When the Master Jesus took the (fourth) Crucifixion Initiation, another crisis arose of equally great import, if not greater. The crisis was brought about because simultaneously with the crucifixion of the Master, the Head of the Hierarchy, the **Christ** (a being higher than Jesus – Lucifer or Sanat Kumara – the so-called "Lord of this World"), took two initiations in one: the **Resurrection Initiation** and that of the **Ascension**. These are the **fifth and sixth initiations, according to the Christian terminology.**"*

According to [Alice Bailey](#),

“The sixth initiation marks the point of attainment of the Christ, and brings the synthetic ray of the system under His control. We need to remember that initiation gives the initiate power on the rays, and not power over the rays, for this marks a very definite difference.

Moreover, [these initiations have their analogues in esoteric Freemasonry and are working their way into Catholic spirituality such as that lived and taught by Vlasic](#) and the Queen of Peace – Medjugorje Network of New Age Marian adepts (*not every Medjugorje pilgrim or even most, but those who enter Queen of Peace and Medjugorje prayer groups and cults such as Caritas in Birmingham, the Queen of Peace Network and many others that are offshoots of those formed by the rebellious friars of Medjugorje and others forming around the world*):

*“The question anent **initiation** is one that is coming more and more before the public. Before many centuries pass **the old mysteries will be restored, and an inner body will exist in the Church** (Caterina and Vlasic’s Central Nucleus) – the Church of the period, of which **the nucleus is already forming** (The Central Nucleus). The taking of the **first initiation** will, before so very long, be **the most sacred ceremony of the Church**. It will also hold a similar place in the [ritual of the Masons](#).”*

This New Age profanation of the Church, liberal interpretation of the Gospels, heretical distortion of the Holy Trinity etc. acquire perverted Marian and eschatological meaning in the context of Medjugorje: On Feb 28, 1982, the seers reported that Our Lady revealed to them that **Fr. Vlasic was providing them with good direction**. On this date Our Lady told the teenagers to:

[“Thank Tomislav very much, for he is guiding you very well.”](#)

On Wednesday, October 7, 1981 at a request from Fr. Tomislav,

“Should we found a community here just like that of Saint Francis of Assisi?”

The “Gospa” told the teens that the sexually active rebel priest (cited for **dubious doctrine, manipulation of consciences, mysticism, and disobedience**) was a saint:

“God has chosen Saint Francis (Vlastic) as His elected one. It would be good to imitate his life. In the meantime, we must realize what God orders us to do.”

Here Our Lady refers to Vlastic as another Saint Francis and that it would be good to imitate him. On Friday, June 3, 1983 Jakov, Vicka, and Ivanka asked the Gospa, **“What do you expect of Fr. Tomislav? Has he begun well?** her reply:

“Yes, it is good. Have him continue.”

This seems to imply that the Gospa of Medjugorje is a New Age devotee herself.

In closing, **it is necessary to make a distinction between the “seers” and their spiritual directors.** It is possible that the friars and others are perverting, distorting, and corrupting the Messages while leading the children astray in order to mitigate the impact of the Virgin Mary’s messages (if it is the Virgin Mary) and appearances at Medjugorje. Father Vlastic’s New Age aberrations could be a later development that have nothing to do with Medjugorje. However, his disobedience, sexual amors, questionable bi-gender communities with the involvement of a Medjugorje seer (Marija, 1987), and his ties to a New Age seer (Caterina) who began communicating with extraterrestrial beings (fallen angels) as early as 1984, as well as Bishop Zanic’s 1984 statement in which he referred to Vlastic as a **“mystifier and charismatic magician”**, make this seem unlikely – in other words, at this juncture, it appears that Medjugorje is a fraud, perhaps a diabolical fraud. Nonetheless, the verdict is still out.

Neither Amoris Laetitia nor Argentinian Guidelines Prescind from Gospel or Tradition

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

PART ONE OF THIS TWO PART ARTICLE on *Amoris Laetitia* concluded that liberal minded bishops have been aided in their drafting and implementation of erroneous Pastoral Guidelines by a barrage of mistrust and confusion engendered by some traditionalists. If instead of contention, they had fallen in-line behind the pope, like Cardinal Mueller and other loyal bishops and Cardinals, if they had clarified the difference between dogmatic and pastoral theology and properly interpreted *Amoris Laetitia*, they would have significantly reduced the liberal ability to operate under the penumbra of confusion. **If instead of confusion, they would have promoted unity, the liberal bishops would have little room to operate.** Since both sides are actively engaged in attacking the pope, [Cardinal Mueller's](#) rebuke to those who are "talking too much" can be taken to apply to both liberal and traditional prelates and laymen:

"To all those who are talking too much, I urge them to study first the doctrine on the papacy and the episcopate of the two Vatican Councils. ... The bishop, as teacher of the Word, must himself be the first to be well-formed so as not to fall into the risk of the blind leading the blind...The Church can never justify a situation which is not in accordance with the will of God."

Consequently, Cardinal Muller concluded:

*“I urge everyone to reflect, studying the doctrine of the Church first, starting from the Word of God in Sacred Scripture, which is **very clear** on marriage. [...] **The Word of God is very clear and the Church does not accept the secularization of marriage. The task of priests and bishops is not that of creating confusion, but of bringing clarity. One cannot refer only to little passages present in Amoris Laetitia, but it has to be read as a whole, with the purpose of making the Gospel of marriage and the family more attractive for persons. It is not Amoris Laetitia that has provoked a confused interpretation, but some confused interpretations of it.**”*

This article will focus on the supposed liberal interpretations and the pope's supposed responses to them, responses that are being attacked by some traditionalists who are using them as fuel to throw on the fire they have ignited to burn papal heresy. What exactly are these acts of the pope that some traditionalists have adopted as an advanced strategy to forward their contention that the pope is a heretic? These acts include papal responses to the guidelines produced by the Bishops of Malta, the German Bishop's Conference, and especially the Bishops of Argentina and those of the Diocese of Rome, headed by the pope himself. It is claimed that in all these dioceses, traditional church teaching about divorced and remarried couples living in adulterous relationships are being ignored and that divorced-remarried adulterers living in objective sin are being admitted to the sacraments.

While there is some truth to this contention; it is *not* true that the pope is supporting these initiatives nor is it true that any of the accusations about him are even correct.

Neither the Argentine Bishops nor the Bishop of Rome permit access to the Eucharist by divorced-remarried people living in adultery as the traditionalists and their erstwhile allies

have loudly and boldly proclaimed. In other words, the traditionalists are wrong, wrong when they say the pope is supporting liberal guidelines, and wrong when they say the above mentioned guidelines teach heresy when in fact, some of them do not! Although a few do teach heresy, these are *not* supported by the pope; the ones that the pope does support such as the Argentine Bishops and those of his own diocese hold to the truth about marriage contrary to what many traditionalists and ideological news outlets have reported. They are either ignorant themselves or hide behind a veil of obfuscation (exactly what they accuse the pope of doing) dependent on other's ignorance, subversion of facts, and regular mis-reading of documents as will be shown document by document in the following.

The Argentine Bishops Guidelines

The issue with the Argentine Bishops comes down to the relationship between [Articles Five and Six](#) of their pastoral guidelines, which state:

5) *“Whenever feasible depending on the specific circumstances of a couple, especially when both partners are Christians walking the path of faith, **a proposal may be made to resolve to live in continence.** Amoris laetitia does not ignore the difficulties arising from this option (cf. footnote 329) and offers the possibility of having access to the sacrament of Reconciliation if the partners fail in this purpose (cf. footnote 364, recalling the teaching that Saint John Paul II sent to Cardinal W. Baum, dated 22 March, 1996).*

6) *In more complex cases, and when a declaration of nullity has not been obtained, **the above mentioned option may not, in fact, be feasible.** Nonetheless, a path of discernment is still possible. If it is acknowledged that, in a concrete*

case, there are limitations that mitigate responsibility and culpability (cf. 301-302), especially when a person believes he/she would incur a subsequent fault by harming the children of the new union, Amoris laetitia offers the possibility of having access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist (cf. footnotes 336 and 351).

Those reading these words with a hard heart looking for error rather than truth come across a line that seems to support their contention that the pope is teaching heresy and they jump all over it; they simply become intellectually disconnected at their glee of finding what they think is an error and then become obstinately unreasonable. For example, in this case, they read Article Five which speaks of a "Proposal" to live in continence" and connect it to Article Six that says, "the above mentioned option (to live in continence) may not, in fact, be feasible." **Then they forget (or ignore) the two clauses preceding that statement and those that come after it.** They then jump to an unsubstantiated conclusion that adulterers can receive Holy Communion because Article Six ends by saying that:

"Amoris laetitia offers the possibility of having access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist"

They are way too quick in making a connection between the two clauses that precede this concluding statement:

1. "The above mentioned option (to live in continence) may not, in fact, be feasible."

(Nonetheless)

2. *"Amoris laetitia offers the possibility of having access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist"*

They think, or want to believe, that this means that a couple living in sin may have access to the the Eucharist WITHOUT the requirement to live in continence, which is a total perversion and misreading of the text.

Before analyzing the relationship between these two articles (and their perverted interpretation), it is necessary to point out that **the Argentine Bishops prefaced this section with a clear teaching about the need to meet sinners and help them find a way to Christ. There is always a path that leads to salvation and union with Christ;** it is the job of the pastor to lead penitents to this path and accompany them along it as good shepherds who know their sheep. Moreover, according to the Argentine Bishops and to Pope Francis, the penitents intention to change and to grow in Christ must be “sincere”, what the Argentine Bishops refer to as **“righteous intention”**, a firm resolve on the part of the penitent couple to **“devote their whole life to the light of the Gospel”**. The couple **must** be penitent or there is no possibility of “accompaniment” – this is clear, but somehow missed by the dissenters; they blatantly disregard the most common English text – it is even in black and white: They must have a **“righteous intention”**, a firm resolve to **“devote their whole life to the light of the Gospel”**.

*“Pastoral accompaniment is an exercise of the “via caritas.” It is an invitation to follow “the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement” (296). This itinerary requires the pastoral charity of the priest who **receives the PENITENT**, listens to him/her attentively and shows him/her the maternal face of the Church, while also accepting his/her **righteous intention** and good purpose to **devote his/her whole life to the light of the Gospel and to practise charity** (cf. 306).”*

In other words, it is accompaniment is a very difficult path

and it is a rare couple that meets these specifications – **there cannot be a path of discernment leading to the Eucharist unless the above conditions are first met.**

Pope Francis ingrained these same requirements into *Amoris Laetitia* from which the Argentine Bishops gathered them. In the pope's words,

“For this discernment to happen, the following conditions MUST NECESSARILY be present: humility, discretion and love for the Church and her teaching, in a sincere search for God’s will and a desire to make a more perfect response to it”. These attitudes are ESSENTIAL for avoiding the grave danger of misunderstandings, such as the notion that any priest can quickly grant “exceptions”, or that some people can obtain sacramental privileges in exchange for favours” (300).

Thus, according to the pope, couples must first of all be

- humble
- discrete
- they must love the Church
- love her teaching
- be sincerely in search of God’s will and
- desire to make a more perfect response to it.

These are NOT suggestions; they are NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS. As Pope Francis states, “These attitudes are ESSENTIAL”. They are essential to avoid any misunderstanding or CONFUSION!

Moving from this general preface to Articles Five and Six, it becomes necessary to examine these two articles, the logic that connects them, and what they say and DO NOT say.

As was just stated above, papal detractors are way too quick in making a connection between the two clauses:

1. “The above mentioned option (to live in continence) may

not, in fact, be feasible.”

(Nonetheless)

2. “*Amoris laetitia* offers the possibility of having access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist”

Nonetheless, they have hastily, rashly and erroneously connected these two clauses because without this rash and faulty connection they are unable to make their specious case.

However sincere their case might be, it suffers from a lack of recall, false propositions, and an inability to correctly connect the two articles thereby resulting in unsound conclusions.

Article Five pertains to a couple that has been meeting the above bulleted requirements necessary to be invited to a path of discernment and continence leading to possible reception of the Eucharist. Because such a couple has been observed by their pastor to be making progress walking with Christ, he is encouraged to invite them further, further along a path that can lead to Holy Communion. This path is made possible by a proposal followed by a *sincere* vow to live in continence as Pope John Paul II spoke of in [*Familiaris Consortio*](#). This much is facile and very clear. Apparently, the detractors get confused when the case becomes more complex, as is the reality in many pastoral situations, complex situations that priests will encounter and must learn to deal with mercifully and with compassion as good shepherds rather than as judgmental myopes limited to seeing everything in black and white thereby facilitating easy *albeit* alienating judgements that turn people away from God rather than toward Him as Pope Francis has stated numerous times.

Looking at Article Six, it is clear that the Argentine Bishops have moved from a more simple scenario (Article Five) to a more complex one. They even alert the reader to the fact: Article Six begins with the words, “in more complex cases.”

Then they proceed to tell the reader exactly the type of complex case they are referring to, *viz.*, a case that involves married couples involved in an adulterous relationship who have NOT received an annulment and who also have children. These are two realities *not* mentioned in Article Five, realities that, as they indicate, make the case more complex.

Thus, we are invited to examine the complexity and how it affects the couple before making a snap judgement that would preclude them from eventually being admitted to the sacraments. The Argentine Bishops are NOT saying that these complexities excuse a couple from a vow of continence necessary to be admitted to Holy Communion as the dissenters have weakly argued.

They are saying that because the case is more complex, different dimensions need to be considered before a process of discernment can be entered into according to the above bulleted GENERAL CRITERIA necessary for ALL cases of discernment. The bulleted criteria are *general and always required*; they are NOT to be forgotten. Nonetheless, there is a more potent point to be made: **The reason the case is more complex is due to the lack of nullity and the additional presence of children.**

Lack of Nullity

Lack of nullity means that the adulterous partners are both married to someone else – they are still bound by marriage vows to their real husband and wife. Because annulments have *not* been obtained, there is no possibility of this relationship ending in marriage, which the *Final Report of the Synod of Bishops* ([Renatio Finalis](#)) included as a goal of discernment:

54. *“When a couple in an irregular union reaches a noteworthy stability through a public bond – and is characterized by*

deep affection, responsibility towards the children and the ability to overcome trials – this can be seen as an opportunity, where possible, to lead the couple to celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. A different case occurs, however, when persons live together without a desire for a future marriage, but instead have the decided intention not to establish any institutionally recognized relationship” (they cannot be invited to walk a path of deeper discernment).

“Hopefully, dioceses will promote various means of discernment for these people and to involve them in the community to help and encourage them to grow and eventually make a conscious, coherent choice. Couples need to be told about the possibility of having recourse to a process of a declaration of nullity regarding their marriage.”

Pope Francis repeats this theme in *Amoris Laetitia*(293, 294):

‘When a couple in an irregular union attains a noteworthy stability through a public bond – and is characterized by deep affection, responsibility towards the children and the ability to overcome trials – this can be seen as an opportunity, where possible, to lead them to celebrate the sacrament of Matrimony”.

“Whatever the case, “ALL these situations require a constructive response seeking to transform them into opportunities that can lead to the full reality of marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel.”

The situation discussed in Article **Six** violates this basic stipulation, *viz.*, it cannot be open to sacramental marriage because the couple has not obtained an annulment. Moreover,

the relationship referred to in Article Six is ridden with a much deeper scandal than the situation in Five. Because the couple in Six are still married to others, most everyone in their parish community is aware of the fact. Thus, **the level of scandal is exceedingly high**, esp. if the situation is uncorrected. Little children looking on learn to accept this situation as normal and valid and thus are lured to future sin themselves:

“But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea” ([Matt 18:6](#)).

Moreover, by abandoning their marital partners, these men and women are also responsible for the adultery committed by their spouses and responsible for those who commit adultery with their spouses – they are spreading a spiritual and moral epidemic:

“Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery” ([Luke 16:18](#)).

Clearly Article Six is significantly more complex. The reason why the above proposal of continence *cannot* be made to the adulterous couple is because the two SHOULD NOT EVEN BE LIVING WITH EACH OTHER – THEY SHOULD SEPARATE! Why, because there is no possibility of marriage as both the pope and bishops stated above! They should NOT be encouraged to continue living with each other; they should be reconciled with their spouses.

However, if reconciliation proves impossible, the second complicating factor, **the reality of children, might make it necessary for the adulterous pair to continue living with each other** for the good of the children who need both a mother and a father esp. if the children are theirs. We are talking about

people who meet the bulleted requirements not every Joe Blow out there. If the couple are living on adultery and have not obtained an annulment, they cannot embrace the requirements for discernment; they cannot make a sincere promise to follow Christ nor can their relationship ever end in marriage; in this case they should be told to separate. However, if they have children, it might be necessary to remain together because children are a mitigating factor in their decision to live together despite all the other objective moral aberrants that make their relationship sinful.

Thus, Article Six does refer to Article Five. But the reason the proposal to live in continence made in Five might *not* be feasible in Six is because both partners are already married and do not have an annulment. However, there are mitigating circumstances for them to remain together (**not mitigating adultery but their moral responsibility for living together**) – the existence of biological children that seems to necessitate that they remain together. Thus, when the Guidelines state that some civilly remarried couples who can't adhere to the Church's teaching of "living like brothers and sisters," who have complex circumstances, and who can't obtain a declaration of nullity for their first marriage, might undertake a "journey of discernment," and arrive at the recognition that in their particular case, there are limitations that "diminish responsibility and culpability." it is referring to living together because of the children! If the Guidelines were interpreted as the dissenters insist *viz.*, as a dispensation to keep sinning and also be admitted to the sacraments two problems arise:

1. First, this type of interpretation does damage to the text as a systematic whole, as Cardinal Mueller stated about *Amoris Laetitia*, the text must be read as a complete WHOLE. If this is remembered, there is a built in check against making a too hasty and faulty interpretation that prescind from the Gospel and the bulleted guidelines

necessary for a process of discernment to begin according to the Argentine Bishops. The way the dissenters want to interpret *Amoris Laetitia*, and the Guidelines that follow, prescind from the Gospel and from the essential requirements for discernment, which both texts caution against.

2. If the Guidelines are read as an excuse for coitus, the remainder does not make sense. **Why would children be hurt if their parents stopped engaging in sexual relations in the privacy of their own room apart from the children, who might *not* even know about them.**

On the other hand, the children would certainly know about and experience the loss of a parent from their home (if asked to separate-as would *normally* be the case); that would harm them.

This makes sense. This is what Article Six is referring to. **A priest might *not* be able to make a proposal to live in continence to an already married and adulterous couple causing public scandal because he should be telling them to separate due to the danger they are putting themselves and their partners in, that is, contributing to the sin of their actual spouses as well as the grave scandal they are causing by living together. Moreover, even if they are permitted to live together for the sake of the children, a proposal to live in continence might not be appropriate because they have no intention of changing;** they might not be living the life of the Gospel or practicing their faith seriously or any other number of many possibilities. The bottom line is that they should NOT be living together and thus such a proposal cannot be made unless there is a mitigating reason for them to remain together such as the existence of children. Even then, a proposal to live in continence, though possible, might not be made to them if they fail to meet the bulleted requirements above. Nonetheless, a path does remain open to them, *esp* if they decide to get serious about their faith and live in continence as brother and sister.

Thus, [Pope Francis teaches](#) in *Amoris Laetitia* (298):

*“The Church acknowledges situations “where, for serious reasons, **such as the children’s upbringing**, a man and woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate”.*

Then in the footnote to this sentence, he adds:

“In such situations, many people, knowing and accepting the possibility of living “as brothers and sisters” which the Church offers them.”

[Pope Francis also applauded the Argentine Bishops](#) Pastoral Guidelines by saying that they corresponded with what he is trying to teach:

“The document is very good and thoroughly specifies the meaning of chapter VIII of Amoris laetitia. There are no further interpretations. I am confident that it will do much good.”

It was following this statement that the dissenters jumped all over both the bishops and the pope saying that they taught and he supported their heresy and thus had intended heresy in *Amoris Laetitia* all along. As has been shown, this is *not* only an unfair stretch, it is an untrue judgement, a judgement that if *not* corrected will come back to haunt those audacious enough to claim they know more than the pope and thus should be teaching him, audacious enough to call the Vicar of Christ a heretic. Perhaps the shoe is on the other foot as is often the case for those who make it a habit of condemning others; apparently this is the case.

How is it that two people can read the same document and come to such divergent understandings? I would like to suggest that it has to do with the spirit with which a person approaches papal writings. If the reader is mistrusting, if he does not like this pope, if he has been conditioned by the negativity of others and allows them to make claims with little or no

evidence *etc*, than his approach to the document is likely conditioned by negative affect.

If on the other hand, the reader loves both Christ and His Vicar, has confidence in the papacy and trusts that the pope is speaking the truth, then the document is approached with a spirit of confidence and love. Men and women approaching papal writings (or any writings) with a positive spirit are *not* trying to catch the pope in error, not looking everywhere for evidence of heresy thereby missing the beauty of the forest because they are looking for fault on every tree. The later are no better than those Jesus condemned as blind guides; they claim to see and want to correct everyone else's blindness. Their pride reached such heights that they even thought Jesus was a heretic Himself. They dare to call others prideful and blind but fail to see that it takes a tremendous amount of pride to call the Vicar of Christ a heretic and to dismiss the Prefect of the CDF as a school boy whom they believe in their audacity should be learning from them. People such as these, people who accuse others of pride and spiritual blindness, those who believe the Vicar of Christ is an arrogant liberal blind heretic approach papal writings infected with a good dose of their own pride. The prefect of the CDF assures the people of God that *Amoris Laetitia* is faithful to long standing Catholic tradition and to the Sacred Scriptures, but the detractors say that he does not know what he is talking about; they look at the same document he is looking at and see only error when he sees systematic truth; they fail to see plain black and white English (but insist on black and white pastoral theology) how can this be?

The Gospel of Luke provides insight into such a phenomenon. In this Gospel, both Zacharias and the Virgin Mary are visited by the Archangel Gabriel, both are presented with miracles involving the birth of a son (Son). Both ask the same question, (How can this be?). One, however, is punished for asking this question while the other is blessed. How can this

be? **It is all about their attitude of Heart.** The Virgin Mary trusted God and thus believed what Gabriel was conveying to her. Her question was simply one of how exactly this miracle was going to take place since she was a vowed perpetual virgin. Her question is not one of doubt or disbelief or incredulity. Her question was an innocent reflection on how God was going to accomplish this miracle as indicated by the fact that once the Angel told her, she assented: "Be it done unto me..." Zachariah, on the other hand, did not trust and had trouble believing that a son could be born to him and Elizabeth in their old age; he had so much trouble believing that he dared to ridicule an Archangel (perhaps God Himself) for which he was punished for his disbelief:

"And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time" ([Luke 1:20](#)).

This case before is is similar. Some, like true devotees of the Virgin Mary, wisely, yet humbly, measure all things in the love of Christ with a trusting and joyful heart: "My spirit rejoices in God my saviour" ([Luke 1:47](#)). They have little or no trouble believing. Papal detractors, on the other hand, are riddled with all kinds of trouble, constantly looking for bad in others, constantly complaining about how bad the Curia and pope are, how sinners should be punished *etc.* Like Zacharias, they have no problem belittling the authority of God's highest ministers. They are weighed down by negativity and habituated to looking for all that is bad rather than searching out the good in all things. Preoccupied with such thoughts, they become laden with misery and doubts that enable them to ridicule others, even the Vicar of Christ, Christ whom the Pharisees had no scruple correcting for his supposed error. As Christ, so too His Vicar; as the pharisees, so those who follow in their negativity, legalism and supposed ritual purity.

They seem to have forgotten the good news and instead think it their duty to inform the rest of the Body of Christ, just how bad things are. The mission of the Church is *not* to renounce, but to pronounce, to pronounce the good news of the Gospel.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, To preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward” ([Luke 4:18-19](#)).

The mission of the bishops is NOT to renounce the papacy but to teach the NATIONS, to fill them with the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Love and Truth

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” ([Matt 28:19](#)).

Rather than do this, papal detractors spend their time looking for papal error, when in truth, they are the ones spreading error. As demonstrated above, they are so busy distorting document by leaving clauses/phrases out, skipping contrary evidence, forgetting general statements, adding occasional vindictive to spice it up in order to vindicate their false supposition etc. They are so busy with these things, that they have difficulty seeing plain truth, the same type of difficulty the pharisees had when TRUTH looked them right in the face. Instead of plain truth, they saw (see) error and then try and pawn it off on the rest of the Church, try to convince anyone silly enough to accept their gross distortions and weakly supported diatribe, diatribe they concoct in order to justify ludicrous assertions such as the the pope is a heretic. When they broadcast such irreverent and blasphemous ideas, simply ask them for corroborating evidence, real formal evidence, primary documents etc. If they are able to produce

any, be sure to review them carefully and compare them to the originals. If the reader habitually does such things, he/she will soon find out how distortion takes place and where the confusion is actually coming from. Lord have mercy!

NOTE:

1. The detractors like to point out that the Apostle Paul corrected Peter publicly so they should do the same. What they fail to tell you is that the rebuke given by Paul was a different species altogether from the rebuke they are advocating. Paul's correction of Peter was a pastoral correction, it was *not* dogmatic, Paul corrected Peter for sitting with the Jews. Is it a sin to sit with Jews? On the other hand, the correction that the dissenters are attempting is DOGMATIC; heresy is a sin against the faith. Paul's correction is NOT applicable; it is a different species altogether. Paul was not accusing Peter of heresy, nor was Catherine's correction of Gregory XI.
2. The author had intended to cover the Diocese of Rome Guidelines as well as those of the Bishops of Malta, however internal policies governing article length are about to be exceeded; therefore, an additional article will have to be included following Easter Monday.

Mary's Perpetual Virginity

Clearly Confirmed in Scripture & Jewish Tradition

[New Era World News and Global Intelligence:](#)

SAINT LUKE'S GOSPEL ACCOUNT of the encounter between the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary contains a remarkable dialogue that confirms the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity, a virginity that she insisted upon before assenting to Gabriel's request that she become the Mother of God. If Luke's account ([Luke 1: 26-35](#)) is read closely in conjunction with ancient Jewish laws pertaining to vows and along with Jewish marital customs, it contains all the information necessary to conclude that Mary had taken a vow of perpetual virginity and that Joseph had accepted her vow. According to the "Law of Vows" recorded in the Jewish Torah, [Book of Numbers](#),

A) *"If a woman vow any thing, and bind herself by an oath, **being in her father's house**, and but yet a girl in age: if her father knew the vow that she hath promised, and the oath wherewith she hath bound her soul, and held his peace, she shall be bound by the vow: Whatsoever she promised and swore, she shall fulfil in deed."*

B) *"If she have a husband, and shall vow any thing, and **the word once going out of her mouth shall bind her soul by an oath**: The day that her husband shall hear it, and not gainsay it, she shall be bound to the vow, and shall give whatsoever she promised. But if as soon as he heareth he gainsay it, and make her promises and the words wherewith she had bound her soul of no effect: the Lord will forgive her" ([Numbers 30: 3-6](#)).*

In addition, Jewish matrimonial laws-customs-traditions consisted of two marital phases necessary for the contracting and consummation of a valid marriage ([*kiddushin*](#) and [*nisu'in*](#)). According to the [Jewish Encyclopedia](#):

*“The term “betrothal” in Jewish law must **not** be understood in its modern sense; that is, the agreement of a man and a woman to marry, by which the parties are not, however, **definitely bound**, but which may be broken or dissolved without formal divorce.”*

In Jewish Law, once the proposal had been made and accepted, the relationship was binding; that is, marriage had already been entered into *albeit* not yet fully consummated. This was so strongly the case that Jewish law required a divorce to nullify the first stage (*kiddushin*) of a marital relationship. Thus, Joseph, who was “betrothed” or “espoused” to Mary, was forced to divorce or to “put her away”, even though they had not yet begun to live together (*nisu'in*):

*“Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When as his mother Mary was **espoused** to Joseph, (but) **before they came together** (*kiddushin*), she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded **to put her away privately**” ([Matt 1:18](#)).*

The [Jewish Encyclopedia](#) explains betrothal this way:

*“When the agreement had been entered into, it was definite and binding upon both groom and bride, who were considered as man and wife in all legal and religious aspects, **except that of actual cohabitation.**”*

“The (Jewish) root אָרַט (“to betroth”), from which the

Talmudic abstract ארוסין (“betrothal”) is derived, must be taken in this sense; i.e., to contract an actual though incomplete marriage. In two of the passages in which it (betroth) occurs (in the scriptures) the betrothed woman is directly designated as “wife” ([II Sam. iii. 14](#), “my wife whom I have betrothed” (“erasti”), and [Deut. xxii. 24](#), where the betrothed is designated as “the wife of his neighbor”). In strict accordance with this sense **the rabbinical law declares that the betrothal is equivalent to an actual marriage and only to be dissolved by a formal divorce.**

Putting the “*Law of Vows*” recorded in Book of Numbers together with the laws/customs regulating Jewish marriage, and the Gospel account given by St. Luke, it is clear that *not* only was Mary a consecrated virgin, but that she had taken a vow of perpetual virginity. St. Luke was very careful to make this fact abundantly clear from his account of the *Angelic Visitation* in which he reveals that when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, **she was already “betrothed” (married) to Joseph. What does that mean?** It means, consequently, that according to Jewish Law well known to Luke, and to Joseph and the Virgin Mary, as well as the Jewish audience first reading the Gospel account of Jesus’ birth, it means that (according to Numbers Article (B) above) Joseph must have been aware of Mary’s vow of virginity and consented to it, for **Luke tells us that Mary was a “virgin” at the time she was “betrothed” to Joseph!**

This scriptural fact helps to explain why Mary was confused at the angel’s message. Luke tells us that Mary was “*troubled at his (Gabriel’s) saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.*” How could she, a consecrated virgin, have a child? Thus, in this state of troubled confusion, she asks, [“How shall this be done,](#) (how can this be?) [because I know not man? “](#) How can a virgin have a child? How can this be, I know not man nor shall I know man even

though I am married to one.

A Note on Virginity and the Consecrated Life

Before proceeding, it is relevant to note that the Old Testament indicates the existence of virgins who served God within the Temple precincts of Jerusalem. In the Second Book of Maccabees the following is recorded:

*“And the women, girded with haircloth about their breasts, came together in the streets. And **the virgins also that were shut up**, came forth, some to Onias, and some to the walls, and others looked out of the windows. And all holding up their hands towards heaven, made supplication” ([2 Maccabees 3: 19-20](#)).*

In Catholic tradition virgins that are “shut up” are called cloistered such as the Carmelite nuns who do not have regular contact with the outside world but live a life of solitude, contemplative prayer and service. Thus, these “shut up” Temple Virgins seem to have constituted a special class of virgins who presumably lived and served in the Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem.

According to [Taylor Marshall](#)“

“There is further testimony of temple virgins in the traditions of the Jews. In the Mishnah, it is recorded that there were 82 consecrated virgins who wove the veil of the Temple” (Mishna Shekalim 8, 5-6)

More mystically, according to the Patristic Fathers as recorded by [Kereszty Roch](#), “*Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*”,

“The patristic argument for the perpetual virginity of Mary

is ... based on the understanding of virginity as a total consecration to God in pure faith and undivided love. They interpret Lk 1:34 as expressing the firm intention (or vow) of Mary to dedicate herself to God as a virgin; such a dedication must be total and irrevocable. They also see in the womb of Mary the New Ark of God overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the New Temple forever sanctified by God's presence. No man may enter that sanctuary since God has made it his own."

Wow!

Ezekiel, moreover, was given a vision of the future Temple in Jerusalem, a mystical temple containing an equally mystical "East Gate":

*"Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and **it was shut**. And he said to me, **"This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut"** ([Ezekiel 44:1](#)).*

Several Fathers of the Church saw the East Gate as a mystical allusion to the Virgin Mary – She is the virginal East Gate through whom **only the Lord**, Himself, could enter. **This mystical gate was to "remain shut", that is, virginal**, never to open to any man. Significantly, in Mary's apparitions, esp. at Fatima, she is always seen ascending to the east, to her place, toward the East Gate. It is through Mary alone that our Lord entered the world. She is the Ark of the Covenant containing the Holy of Holies, the incarnate Son of God. It is through her, and her alone, that the Lord entered humanity and took on human flesh as the "blessed fruit of her womb".

Thus, St. Jerome was able to write that **Christ alone, as the firstborn could open the mystical doors of her virginal**

womb ([The “firstborn” were not given the title because there was a “second-born.” They were called “firstborn” at birth. Jesus being “firstborn” does not require that more siblings be born after him](#)):

Christ, as the firstborn, opened the virgin's womb :

“Sanctify unto me every firstborn that openeth the womb among the children of Israel, as well of men as of beasts: for they are all mine” ([Exodus 13:2](#)).

The early heretics refused to acknowledge this mystery pertaining to the opening of the “mystical gate, which was prefigured by the *Eastern door of the Temple* ([Ezekiel 44:2](#)), which closed again when once the High Priest had gone through it” ([Against the Pelagians Book II](#)).

Thus, according to [Canon 604](#) of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, there are such servants of God known as consecrated virgins, virgins who imitate the Virgin Mary by living a type of consecrated life:

[Canon §1](#). *Similar to these forms of [consecrated life](#) is the order of virgins, who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, **are betrothed mystically to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church.***

Return to Mary's Perpetual Virginity

The above scriptural facts and historical points of sacred tradition pertaining to virginity, betrothal, and the consecrated life help to explain why Mary was confused at the Angel Gabriel's message. Luke tells us that Mary was “troubled at his (Gabriel's) saying, and thought with herself what

manner of salutation this should be.” How could she, a consecrated virgin, have a child? Thus, In this state of troubled confusion, she asked, “How shall this be done, (how can this be?) because I know not man? “ How can a virgin have a child? How can this be, I know not man nor shall I know man even though I am married to one.

Interestingly, Luke informs us that both Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary were visited by the Archangel Gabriel, both were presented with a message involving the birth of a son (Son). Both responded with the same question, (How can this be?). Zacharias, however, was punished for asking this question while the Virgin Mary was blessed. How can this be?

The Virgin Mary trusted God and thus believed what Gabriel was conveying to her. Her question was simply one of how exactly this miracle was going to take place since she was a vowed perpetual virgin. Her question was *not* one of doubt or disbelief or incredulity. Her question was an innocent reflection on how God was going to accomplish this miracle as indicated by the fact that **once the Angel told her that her virginity was to remain inviolate, she assented to his request: “Be it done unto me...”**

Zacharias, on the other hand, was presented with a substantially much less difficult announcement. When the Angel Gabriel told him he would have a son, his only apparent impediment was a *physical one*: old age; whereas Mary suffered from a moral and spiritual impediment involving a solemn vow to God, a vow so solemn that even her husband consented to it, as indicated by her perplexity. Mary, graced by God, reverently tested Gabriel. Zacharias, however did not trust God; he had trouble believing that a son could be born to him and Elizabeth in their old age; he had so much trouble believing that he dared to ridicule an angel by implying that the good tidings that Gabriel was announcing were somehow untrue (something that even the Archangel Michael would *not* do

when contesting with Satan over the body of Moses):

*“When Michael the archangel, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses, he durst **not** bring against him the judgment of railing speech, but (simply) said: The Lord rebuke thee” ([1 Jude 9](#)).*

Consequently, Zacharias was punished for his disbelief, for his incredulity before a princely messenger of God, a messenger certainly deserving of more respect than Satan to whom even Michael showed respect for his fallen but angelic dignity.

“And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time” ([Luke 1:20](#)).

Because Mary was a consecrated virgin, she was honestly confused; her confusion over the matter led her to question the Angel Gabriel, led her to reverently protest his request that she become the Mother of the Messiah, especially if that meant that she had to violate or relinquish her vow of virginity to God. Thus, the Virgin Mary found herself in a quandary, a confusing situation that required her to test or “try” the spirit addressing her:

“Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God” ([1 John 4:1](#))

Was Gabriel from God or a diabolical messenger? Would God ask her to break her solemn vow, would God reject her virginity? Was this a ploy to get her to engage in sexual intercourse with St. Joseph? These are the type of implicit questions she reverently places before Gabriel and it is *not* until the angel clarified exactly what he meant by his message that she knew he is from God. It is not until this point that she, the

handmaid of the Lord, was willing to consent. **Her confusion and reverent protest make it clear that Her vow of virginity was still operative and that Joseph had assented to it as well.**

More importantly, her question (how can this be?) would be meaningless if she had *not* taken a vow of virginity and shared it with Joseph. Clearly, she and Joseph were “betrothed” (in the first stage of marriage) and would soon be living together. Her question clearly indicates that she and Joseph had agreed to live in virginity; otherwise she would NOT have had a need to ask such a question. **The question makes no sense unless Mary was a virgin and planned to remain one. If she and Joseph were to consummate their marriage by a unitive and procreative marital act, she would not have had to ask the question.** She would *not* have been confused. Mary knew what Her virginity entailed; she knew how babies are made.

Mary, however, had taken a vow of virginity and in so doing had entered into a spiritual and nuptial relationship with God; she had given her virginity to Him. He in return accepted her vow and they (Mary and YHWH) were thus united in a sacral bond as when a “*consecrated virgin*” gives her virginity to God and thereby enters into a nuptial relationship often attested to by the putting on a wedding ring to indicate consecration and virginal-espousal.



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades placing wedding ring on Consecrated Virgin at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, Indiana

Thus, because of her virginity, Mary was not only confused by the angel's request, she also uttered a mild form of protest: "How can this be" or "I do not think I can do this" since I have given my virginity to God and He has accepted? Aware that God does not change His mind and aware of the perpetual nature of her virginal vow, she was naturally confused. Would an angel of God ask her to relinquish her vow, a solemn nuptial vow of virginity by which she was related to Him in an especial nuptial manner? So she asked, "How can this be?" Has God changed His mind? or perhaps to Gabriel: Are you truly from God or somewhere else?

When Gabriel elucidated his message, it became clear that instead of being asked to violate her vow, Mary was being invited to consummate it, to offer her virginity to Him, to open the mystical East Gate through whom *only He* could

spiritually enter by overshadowing her with His glory. When it was clear that God, not Joseph, was to be the operative spiritual cause of her mystical conception, she consented.

This is worth repeating: It was NOT until the Archangel Gabriel assured her that she could keep her vow, assured her that God had *not* changed His mind, and that she could remain a virgin, it was *not* until this surety was given, that the Virgin Mary gave her *fiat*, gave her consent. Presumably, if Gabriel had revealed to her that the child to be born would be St. Joseph's, she would *not* have given her consent, would *not* have replied "yes" but rather, "no": "***non fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum***".

The Archangel Gabriel, however, revealed to her the miraculous nature of the Messiah's birth. He was to be formed in her virginal womb by a divine act of God, the God to whom she had consecrated her virginity. Once this was clear in her mind, and *not* a moment before, she immediately gave her consent:

"Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum": "Let it be done unto me according to thy word."

Thus, God's request through Gabriel provided Mary with the opportunity to fulfill her vow, to say yes to the Lord as she was consecrated to do as His handmaid. But before consenting, she asked the Angel Gabriel to clarify his message. Once he assured her that her vow of virginity was to remain inviolate, that she was to give virgin birth while married to Joseph, only then did she consent. **Her consent was conditional upon the ability to remain a virgin**, a condition that Joseph was aware of and had consented to according to the Torah, according to Jewish marriage customs, and to the Gospel of St. Luke who derived his data directly from the Virgin Mary herself.

The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

THE BROWN SCAPULAR HAS BEEN CALLED “The Livery of Our Lady”, “Grace Garment” and the “Sign of Mary”. The scapular is a sign of the Queen Mother’s maternal care for the souls of all her children, all those who wear it with filial and [true devotion](#). In their love of and obedience to the Virgin Mary, they imitate Jesus, who fully aware of His Divine mission and fully cognizant of His Divine relationship with His Eternal Father, nonetheless, submitted himself to the Virgin Mary ([Luke 2:51](#)). Saint Luke informs his readers that “subject” to Her and to St Joseph,

“Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man” ([Luke 2: 51-52](#)).

As the mother of Jesus, and of His Church, the Queen Mother assists her children to advance in wisdom and favor before God (and before men) until they become one with Him as members of His “Mystical Body”.

Although every member of the mystical *Body of Christ* has Mary for his or her mother, the Brown Scapular of Mt. Carmel is a *singular* Sign of Mary’s highly favored Carmelite family, her “favoured” children, the children of a family that has produced more saints than any other spirituality in the history of Christendom. This seems to be one of the reasons why **the Virgin Mary choose to appear at Fatima as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel** and to offer the Brown Scapular of Carmel to all her children. The spirituality of Mt. Carmel was the

spirituality of Sister Lucia, of the Holy Father John Paul II, of Doctors of the Church such as Saints John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila as well as Terese of Lisieux and of so many outstanding models of perfection that inspire souls to avail themselves of this proven way to holiness and Christian perfection. Those who heard Jesus speak in the synagogues of Nazareth were spellbound and unaware of where He had gained His knowledge and wisdom prompting them to ask:

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary... Whence therefore hath he all these things”
([Matt13:53-56](#))?

Although His countrymen were unaware of the origin of His wisdom and unaware that they had answered their own question, the Saints of Christendom were, and are, fully aware that Jesus received his virtue, learning, and wisdom from his parents, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus, when Sister Lucia (one of the three shepherd-children who communed with Our Lady at Fatima) was asked why Our Lady held out the Scapular following the October 13, 1917 Miracle of the Sun, she replied, because **“Our Lady wants all of Her children to wear it.”** The scapular is a sign of her maternal help and protection, a “grace garment” emblematic of Her regal and motherly authority and of Her ordained ability to assist their growth in virtue, wisdom and love necessary to overcome the world, the weakness of their flesh, their passions and the pride of life, which diminish their strength and by degrees render them increasingly prone to the cunning of superior angelic beings.

Origin of the Scapular

As recorded in the Old Testament, 850 years before the birth of Christ, the Prophet Elijah challenged the Satanic priests of Baal (pagan priests supported by King Ahab – the seventh

King of Israel – who led the nation into the spiritual sin of apostasy) to a spiritual contest pitting the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob against the pagan god Baal. Three years earlier, Elijah had entered Jerusalem to confront Ahab warning him to return to the God of Israel or the nation would be chastised. Ahab brazenly dismissed the prophet. Since that day, the day that Elijah was expelled by Ahab from the royal palace, no rain was released over the Holy Land nor was a cloud seen. Three years later Israel found itself in the throes of severe famine. It was then that Elijah rebuked Ahab and summoned him to Mt. Carmel along with the apostate priests and false-prophets of Baal:

“And when Ahab had seen Elijah, he said: Art thou he that troublest Israel? And Elijah said: I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father’s house, who have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed Baalim. Nevertheless send now, and gather unto me all Israel, unto Mt.Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, who eat at Jezabel’s table ([1 Kings 18: 17-19](#)).

Elijah pleaded with the crowd to return to God:

“How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him! but if Baal, follow him!”

But no one spoke a word in favor of the God of Israel thereby prompting the prophet to propose a contest. Both he and the apostate prophets would build altars, place a holocaust on them and pray to their God/god to send down a consuming fire. The God/god who sent down the unquenchable fire would be acknowledged as the true God of Israel. The druid apostates prayed and slashed themselves for hours to no avail. Most Christians know this story, how the prophet **Elijah prayed and God immediately sent down fire** from heaven to consume his sacrifice followed by the slaying of the prophets of Baal.

These memorable events, however, are *not* the main focus of the scriptural account. Like an “after party”, the main focus is actually what happened afterward, the “after event”.

What happened Afterward?

Immediately afterward, King Ahab went off to dine and refresh himself while Elijah proceeded to the top of Mt. Carmel where he crouched down to the earth and put his head between his knees to pray. Elijah then summoned his servant to go and look out over the sea and come back and tell him what he observed. Six times the servant went forth and came back with the same reply:

“I see nothing”

Neither King Ahab, Elijah’s servant, nor anyone among the gathered multitude knew that the prophet was about to “behold a prophetic vision of the spiritual Salvation of all mankind through an Immaculate Virgin” ([John Haffert – Co-Founder World Apostolate of Fatima](#))

Elijah sent his servant a **seventh time** (seven indicating the fullness of time). The servant then observed a *mysterious cloud rising out of the sea in the shape of a human foot* ([1 Kings 18:43-44](#)).

Years later, Elijah conveyed to the prophets of Mt. Carmel that **this mysterious foot foreshadowed the coming of an Immaculate Virgin who would rise out of the sea of humanity to bring grace and consolation to the world: the foot of the “Woman” that would crush the head of Satan** (as Elijah had just crushed his false-prophets, the prophets of Baal) **as prophesied in [Gen 3:15](#).**

This mysterious “Woman” is revealed by St. John to be the the Virgin Mary ([Rev 11:19](#) – [12:1-6](#)) the “Great Sign” the new and

mystical **Ark of the Covenant**, the **Holy Tabernacle in which God dwells**; She is also the prophetic and eschatological “Woman” who, along with her “seed” ([Rev 12:17](#)), will crush the head of Satan as foretold in Genesis. As such, she is symbolized by both foot and cloud.

*“Then the **cloud** covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting, because the **cloud** settled down upon it and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle** (as He filled the Virgin Mary with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, [Rev 11:19-12:1](#), and overshadowed Her with His glory at the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel – [Luke 1:35](#)). Whenever the cloud rose from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on their journey. But if the **cloud** did not lift, they would not go forward; only when it lifted did they go forward. **The cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day**, and fire in the cloud at night, in the sight of the whole house of Israel in all the stages of their journey” ([Exodus 40: 34-38](#)), as the Virgin Mary accompanied Jesus at every stage of His journey, birth to death – She was there.*

As soon as Elijah was told of the mysterious cloud in the shape of a foot he rose from prayer; then the heavens grew dark with moisture laden clouds and cascading winds. As the clouds passed over the land for the first time in three years water fell, like divine grace, to renew God’s people.

*“Go up, and look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said: There is nothing. And again he said to him: Return seven times. And **at the seventh time, behold, a little cloud arose out of the sea like a man’s foot... behold the heavens grew dark, with clouds, and wind, and there fell a great rain.** ([Kings I, 18:43-44](#)).”*

Some two thousand, one hundred and ten years later (1260) King Saint Louis of France found himself leading a Crusade to the

Holy Land; while there, he was told of holy-men descended from the long line of Elijah who lived on Mt. Carmel. The king ascended Carmel and found on its heights a remnant of monks living among its caves and hollows. Appropriately, they called themselves the "Hermits of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel". Due to the Muslim onslaught, these hermits were being forced to emigrate to Europe.

Before doing so, they told King Louis that they were descended from the prophet Elijah. They told him that they were called hermits of Saint Mary because of the foot shaped cloud Elijah had seen coming out of the sea. This foot, they said, was a prophetic foreshadowing of the "Woman" foretold by God, an Immaculate Virgin, who was to conceive the savior and crush the pride of Satan beneath the humble heel of Her seed.

THEY ALSO SAID THAT THE PROPHET ELIJAH HAD COMMANDED HIS FOLLOWERS TO PRAY FOR THE COMING OF THIS VIRGIN SAYING THAT "THE CLOUD WAS A DIVINE MALEDICTION AGAINST THE DEVIL":

"I shall place enmities between thee and the Woman, thy seed and Her seed . . . thou shalt lie in wait for Her heel and She shall crush thy head . . . ,([Gen 3:15](#))"

A short fifty years later (after the visit of King Louis), The Virgin Mary appeared to **Saint Peter Thomas** (a French Carmelite and General to the Papal Court of Pope Clement VI at Avignon) and told him that **the Order of Mt. Carmel would endure to the end of the world.** She told Saint Peter that "Elijah (the order's founder), obtained it (the promise) a long time ago from my Son." Three Hundred years following this exchange between St. Louis and the Hermits of Mt. Carmel, Jesus Himself revealed to Saint Teresa of Avila, that this same order of hermits should be known as "The Order of the Virgin".

Six years before King Louis transported the hermits to France, a group of crusaders had already taken others to England. While in England, an unusual holy man by the name of **Simon**

Stock joined them at the request of the Virgin Mary who had made their landing in England known to him. Like another Elijah, Simon departed from the world and dwelt alone in the English forest living in the hollow of a tree trunk. The Virgin Mary personally appeared to him and told him that her sons from Carmel were coming to England and that he should join them. A short six years later (1245) Simon was made General of the entire order. The *Order of the Virgin*, however, was despised by its English hosts for their austere and foreign spirituality. Throughout England the secular clergy rose against these begging ill-clad mendicants. Several times, under Simon's leadership, it appeared as if the *Order of Our Lady* would dissolve. The young general, abandoned, perplexed, and infirm, retired in seeming defeat to consider how the Queen Mother would preserve Her order.

In the words of the [Little Flower](#), St Terese of Lisieux, referring to Saint Simon Stock:

"It was an illness in which Satan assuredly had a hand . . . He little knew, however, that the Queen of Heaven was keeping a faithful and affectionate watch from above...and was making ready to still the tempest just as the frail and delicate stem was on the point of breaking."

Exciting himself to deep prayer, Simon cried out from the depth of his soul and then recited the "*Flos Carmeli*" or "*Flower of Carmel*", which after the *Hail Mary* is often called "the most beautiful of all Marian prayers":

*"Flower of Carmel, Vine blossom laden, Splendor of Heaven,
Childbearing maiden,
None equals thee!
O Mother benign, Who no man didst know, On all Carmel's
children
Thy favors bestow, Star of the Sea!"*

As he raised his head from this prayer, the room was bathed in bright light. Three in his midst stood the Blessed Virgin surrounded by a cohort of angels. She descended toward him holding in her hands a brown scapular. Extending it forth she spoke the following words:

“RECEIVE, MY BELOVED SON, THIS HABIT OF THY ORDER: THIS SHALL BE TO THEE AND TO ALL CARMELITES A PRIVILEGE, THAT WHOSOEVER DIES CLOTHED IN THIS SHALL NEVER SUFFER ETERNAL FIRE.”

This extraordinary privilege was later extended to all the faithful who accept the Virgin as their Spiritual Mother and don Her livery, the Brown Scapular of Mt. Carmel. In the words of [Pope Pius IX](#):

*“This most extraordinary gift of the Scapular from the Mother of God to Saint Simon Stock brings its great usefulness not only to the Carmelite Family of Mary **but also to all the rest of the faithful** who wish, affiliated to that Family, to follow Mary with a very special devotion.”*

All who are enrolled in the Brown Scapular belong to the Carmelite Family as members of the Scapular Confraternity.

Many popes have underscored the veracity of this maternal pledge. They have ratified this privilege of eternal salvation, salvation that comes through the eternal merits of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ assisted by His heavenly Mother, the Woman clothed with the Sun. She has promised all of Her children, those who die clothed in Her Brown Scapular, those who have perseveringly and devoutly served Her Son, She has promised to assist them all with the grace of *final perseverance* in holiness and the grace of *final penitence* by which they are saved from eternal fire. Some of the popes who have ratified this maternal promise include: Pope Alexander V, Pope Nicholas V, Pope Sixtus IV, Pope Clement VII, Pope Paul III, Pope St. Pius V, Pope Clement

VIII, Pope Leo XI, Pope Paul V, Pope Urban VIII, Pope Alexander VII, Pope Benedict XIV, Pope Pius VI, Pope St. Pius X, Pope Benedict XV, Pope Pius XI and [Pope Saint John Paul II](#) who died clothed in his scapular.



Pope John Paul II clothed in Brown Scapular

This scapular promise caused [Pope Benedict XV](#) to proclaim:

*“Let all of you have a common language and a common armor: the language, the sentences of the gospel; the armor, the Scapular of Mary which all ought to wear and which **enjoys the singular privilege of protection even after death.**”*

The Sabbatine Privilege

Catholic theologians and authorities like **Saint Robert Bellarmine** and **Pope Benedict XIV** explained the concept that anyone dying clothed in the scapular would not suffer the fires of hell to mean that our Blessed Mother will assist them at the hour of death with the graces necessary for **final contrition** or **final perseverance in the state of grace**. The **“Sabbatine Privilege”** is a further privilege: That those who die clothed in the Brown Scapular will be released from purgatory the first Saturday following their death.

The Sabbatine Privilege does *not* permit violations of the moral law as if a wearer could sin and *be free from the* guilt of punishment. According to **Pope Pius XI**

“Those who wish to have the Blessed Mother as a helper at the hour of death, must in life merit such a signal favor by abstaining from sin and laboring in Her Honor”

The Promise Extends into Purgatory

Ever since the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Simon Stock (July 16, 1251), multitudes have found it difficult to believe that for so fractional a devotion as belonging to Her Scapular Confraternity, a person could be blessed with salvation. So the Mother of God returned to make a Promise even more astounding! In the year after Saint Peter Thomas was informed by Her that “ the Order of Carmel is destined to exist until the end of the world”, the Queen of Heaven conferred a favor so astounding that **Pope Benedict XV** (1914-1922) pronounced the following:

*“Let all of you have a common language and a common armor: the language, the sentences of the gospel; the armor, the Scapular of Mary which all ought to wear and which **enjoys the singular privilege of protection even after death.**”*

[In 1613 the Holy Office under Pope Paul V](#) issued a decree on the Sabbatine Privilege:

*“The Carmelite Fathers may preach that the Christian people can piously believe in the aid of the souls of the brethren and confratres of the Sodality of the Most Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel. Through her continuous intercessions, pious suffrages, merits, and special protection the Most Blessed Virgin, **especially on Saturday**, the day dedicated to her by the Church, **will help after their death the brethren and members of the Sodality who die in charity.** In life they must have (1) worn the habit, (2) observed chastity according to their state, and (3) have recited the Little Office. If they do not know how to recite it, they are to (3a) observe the*

*fasts of the Church and to **abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays**, except for the feast of Christmas.”*

In 1890 Pope Leo XIII began the process of **granting the faculty to confessors to commute the condition of abstinence into other good works** for the gaining of the Sabbatine Privilege. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia,

“The faculty to sanction this change was granted to all confessors by [Leo XIII](#) in the [Decree](#) of the Congregation of Indulgences of 11 (14) June, 1901.”

Thus, according to Pope Leo XIII, in order to gain the privilege one must:

1. **Be enrolled in the Brown Scapular Confraternity (This is a simple ceremony which can be performed by any priest).**
2. **Wear the Scapular**
3. **Observe chastity** according to one’s state in life and
4. **Recite daily the Little Office** of Our Lady, or if one does not know how to recite it, abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

However, since Pope Leo XIII, the **commutation of the fourth condition** has become a common practice. According to a statement made by the Carmelite Fathers at the National Scapular Center, **every priest now has the right to invest the faithful in the Brown Scapular and to substitute the rosary in lieu of the [Little Office](#)**. Now, other spiritual exercises may be assigned by a confessor and substituted for the fourth requirement; most pray the rosary instead.

Regarding the Sabbatine Privilege

Saint Bernardine said that the Blessed Virgin always liberates Her special devotees from the torments of purgatory and **Saint Denis the Carthusian** and **Saint Peter Damian** wrote that on the

feasts of the Assumption, Christmas and Easter: "Our Lady descends into purgatory and takes many souls from it."

Saint John of the Cross rejoiced to die on Saturday because of this "Sabbatine" Privilege". He died in 1591 saying:

"The Mother of God and of Carmel hastens to purgatory with grace, on Saturday, and delivers those souls who have worn Her Scapular. Blessed be such a Lady who wills that, on this day of Saturday, I shall depart from this life!"

Pope Pius XI said of the Sabbatine Privilege:

"Everyone should strive for it."

The Sabbatine Privilege was granted by a pope and many popes have ratified it:

John XXII
Alexander V
Nicholas V
Sixtus, IV
Clement VII
Paul III
Saint Pius V
Clement VIII
Leo XI
Paul V
Urban VIII
Alexander VII
Benedict XIV
Pius VI
Pius X
Benedict XV
Pius X

Of the popes who have sanctioned the Privilege, note these words of St. Pius V (*Superna dispositione* . . . Feb. 8, 1565):

“With apostolic authority and by tenor of the present, we approve each of the privileges. (of the Carmelite Order) and also the Sabbatine.”

However, simple as it may seem, **“Our Lady revealed to the Ven. Dominic of Jesus and Mary that:**

“Although many wear my Scapular, only a few fulfill the conditions for the Sabbatine Privilege.”

Similarly, at her death the saintly Carmelite, **Frances of the Blessed Sacrament**, exclaimed:

“There are only a few who receive the Privilege because only a few fulfill the conditions”

Presumably the reason few people earn the especial privilege has to do with the observance of chastity according to a person's state of life. That is, a married man must remain loyal to his wife and spurn all others; unmarried couples are to abstain from intercourse and foreplay until marriage; consecrated virgins are to remain virgins and priests and religious celibate. However, according to Our Lady of Fatima, **“more people go to hell for sins of the flesh than for any other reason.”** Likewise, more than one holy man or woman has quipped, **“if there were no sixth commandment we would all be in heaven.”**

It is the practice of chastity that is detrimental to many. It takes moral strength known as *natural fortitude* aided by many acts of self-denial to strengthen the will so that it may be assisted by the theological gift of fortitude to withstand temptations of the flesh. Fortitude is a virtue that must be attained by years of discipline and spiritual exercise so that a person might produce the resplendent fruit of chastity, one of the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, fruits that are evidence of the Divine Life operating in the human soul.

Thus, Pope Pius XII emphasized the value of Scapular devotion:

*“There is no one who is not aware how greatly a love for the Blessed Virgin Mother of God contributes to the enlivening of the Catholic faith and to the raising of the moral standard. These effects are especially secured by means of those devotions which more than others are seen to **enlighten the mind** with celestial doctrine and to **excite souls to the practice of the Christian life**. In the first rank of the most favored of these devotions, that of the holy Carmelite Scapular must be placed—a devotion that has produced so many and such salutary fruits.*

Pope Leo XIII articulated the same theological verity regarding devotion to the “Most Blessed Virgin of Mt. Carmel **whence flow the richest and most wholesome fruits for the soul.**”

Consequently, the Church grants a Plenary Indulgence on the day a person is enrolled in the Scapular. To gain the indulgence, a person must go to confession and receive Holy Communion within eight days and pray for the intention of the Holy Father.

The Final Word

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia:

“The Sabbatine privilege thus consists essentially in the early liberation from purgatory, through the special intercession and petition of Mary, which she graciously exercises in favour of her devoted servants preferentially – as we may assume – on the day consecrated to her, Saturday.

Bogus Attack on Pope Moves from *Amoris Laetitia* to Subsequent Pastoral Guidelines

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

AFTER PRESENTING AN ARTICLE on the moral soundness of the the document [*Amoris Laetitia*](#), the author was applauded for doing a good job using the document itself to demonstrate its moral rectitude and loyalty to both scripture and tradition. However, it was argued that the article, "[*Cardinal Burke Still At It, Causing Confusion on an Already Settled and Clear Issue*](#)", failed to take into account the subsequent "acts" of various Bishop's Conferences, Conferences that drafted various Pastoral Guidelines, some of them very liberal, and the pope's responses to them. These diverse guidelines, and papal responses to them, supposedly reveal the pope's true intent as a liberal reformer committed to a modernist liberal agenda, which is the cause behind his subtly introducing heresy into *Amoris Laetitia* by way of purposeful confusion. The pope has been assailed for these Episcopal Guidelines and supposed responses to them and the author lambasted for failure to cover them, as if they were approps for an article limited to the moral rectitude of the document *Amoris Laetitia* itself – the *document* and *subsequent acts* intended to implement its propositions are different topics. Thus, in this article, the author will take up the issue of subsequent "acts" that followed in the wake of the document to demonstrate the claim that *Amoris Laetitia* introduces heresy by way of confusion, is as bogus as the claim that the pope's subsequent responses are

proof of his intent to introduce heresy by way of confusion.

Moreover, it will be demonstrated that the most confused people are the ones making the claims about the pope causing confusion; their confusion not only pertains to the post-synodal exhortation, it carries right on up to and includes the various Episcopal Guidelines being drafted to implement *Amoris Laetitia* in the various dioceses throughout the world. Some of the confusion is due to a seeming inability to integrate and adequately recall the set of systematic data presented in *Amoris Laetitia* as explained in the previous article. This intellectual, perhaps moral limit is related to a further inability to comprehend meaning or due to a willful desire to remain ignorant so that the detractors can continue their tirade against the Vicar of Christ. Under the guise of reverence and loyalty to the truth, some of these vehement detractors appear to be among the most disloyal and erroneous "Sons of the Church". [Cardinal Ratzinger](#), while serving as Prefect of the [Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith](#) (CDF), captured the latter idea:

"It is necessary to be strong in faith and to resist error even when it masquerades as piety."

The culprit is brought into stark relief when Sacred Scriptures shed their light on the theme of error masquerading in piety: false apostles masquerading as "apostles of Christ."

*"And what I do I will continue to do, **in order to end this pretext** of those who seek a pretext for being regarded as we (the apostles) are in the mission of which they boast. For **such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, who masquerade as apostles of Christ**. And no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light. So it is not strange that his **ministers** also masquerade as ministers of righteousness" ([2 Corinthians 11: 12-15](#)).*

Before continuing, it must be pointed out, that the author is NOT referring to traditionalists who have sought union and are in union with the See of Peter, like the good priests of [The Priestly Order of St. Peter \(FSSP\)](#); he is referring to those who have separated themselves, those who consider the Vicar of Christ to be some type of false prophet, who consider him to be an ersatz pope, those who teach that the Chair of Peter is vacant and who reject ecumenical council Vatican II. Those who like [Bishop Williamson](#) (head of the SSPX Resistance excommunicated for ordaining a bishop in 2015), argue that the Vatican headed by Pope Francis is a “cuckoo’s nest”:

*“Wherever the remainder of the true nightingales (traditionalists) are visibly gathered, in whatever makeshift nest, they are in the Church, **they are the true visible Church**, and their beautiful song testifies to anyone who has ears to hear that **the cuckoos are nothing but cuckoos who have stolen the Catholic nest which they presently occupy,**”*

The [SSPX Resistance](#) believe that the SSPX (from which they broke) has compromised too much with Rome (esp. about Vatican Council II) in order to be brought back into union, (something that has NOT been achieved), *SSPX Resistance* holds that Rome is the “enemy” of the Catholic “Faith”:

*“Unless the Society’s (SSPX) leadership is shaken out of its **dream of peace with Conciliar Rome** as revealed by them, then the last worldwide bastion of Catholic Tradition risks being on its way to surrendering to **the enemies of the Faith**. Maybe bastions are out of date.*

Sedevacantists (supposed Catholics who [generally] believe and teach that there has not been a valid pope since Pius XII) object to supposed errors that have infected the Church since Vatican Council II, but rather than work for internal reform through a process of cooperation, they exacerbate the problem by rejecting every pope since John XXIII and the Ecumenica

Council that he called into being. The movement, in its most illustrious form began with Archbishop Lefebvre who started the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) in 1983. **Originally schismatic and favoring sedevacantism, SSPX has since modified its views. Like a Protestant sect, SSPX has spawned other dissident groups** that have either held it to be too lenient or too lax.

For example, The [Society of Saint Pius V \(SSPV\)](#) was formed when Archbishop Lefebvre expelled Frs. Clarence Kelly, Anthony Cekada, Daniel Dolan and Eugene Berry from the SSPX due in large part because Lefebvre instructed them to accept new members previously ordained to the priesthood according to the revised rites of Pope Paul VI. These priests were also opposed to Lefebvre's insistence that they use the 1962 edition of the Roman Missal, which was issued by Pope John XXIII. [Fr. Dolan later admitted](#) that while still a member of the SSPX, he believed that the See of Peter was vacant:

*" As a seminarian at Ecône (SSPX Seminary in Switzerland) back in the autumn of 1973, he had already come to the conclusion that the only logical explanation for evil of the New Mass and the errors of Vatican II was that **Paul VI**, due to personal heresy, had lost the pontificate. Ever since, he has steadfastly held that position regarding Paul VI and his successors, and never once acknowledged them as popes in the Canon of his Mass. This explanation for the situation after Vatican II later came to be known popularly as "sedevacantism" (from the Latin term for the interregnum between popes) – "the seat is vacant"*

Other groups that broke off from the SSPX include [SSPX Resistance](#), quoted above, various sedevacantist groups such as the highly suspect [Holy Family Monastery](#) in Fillmore, New York run by an [ersatz monk](#) who, like many who accuse others of heresy, [teaches heresy himself](#); at least that is what some other sedevacantists say about him. Still others have come

back into union with Rome such as the FSSP, also mentioned above. Groups like the FSSP and others such as the Fraternity of [Saint Vincent Ferrer](#) in principle accept the Second Vatican Council, as well the Novus Ordo Mass, which they regard as a *legitimate* but somewhat imprudent compromise with the the modern world. Thus, with the approval of the Holy See, they continue to celebrate the Tridentine Mass while being in union with Rome.

In summary, traditionalists are a broad group of diverse Catholics, some of whom have separated themselves from communion with Rome and others who have sought after and obtained communion after splitting from the SSPX or affiliated societies. It is the former group that this article is critical of, critical because they have dared to be critical first, critical of the papacy, of the liturgy, and of the church's evangelization efforts in the modern world; most egregious is the issue they have with the pope, thinking it little offense to call him a heretic, schismatic, moron, false-prophet, you name it; they like to call Pope Francis, "Bergoglio". If they think they have a right to demean, twist and distort the truth, to be critical of the pope, than they should accept criticism themselves and learn to grow accustomed to it and to a whole lot more which is coming their way for obstinate refusal to accept the Vicar of Christ; for sins against the papacy; sins against unity; since against truth, which they claim to uphold; for the sin of scandal and, like the Pharisees, for the sin of leading others into schism and error.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves" ([Matt 23:15](#)).

What are the acts subsequent to *Amoris Laetitia* that these so-called traditionalists are referring to as proofs that Pope

Francis intends heresy? They are Bishop's Guidelines written by various bishops and Bishop's Conferences throughout the world for the purpose of localizing and implementing the teaching contained in *Amoris Laetitia* at the diocesan level. First they reject *Amoris Laetitia* by falsely claiming that it contains error or at least confusion that leads to error.

When they lose this argument, they resort to subsequent acts uncharitably and falsely claiming that the pope has supported mortal sin by admitting public adulterers to Holy Communion because of his approval of the Maltese Bishop's Guidelines, the acceptance of the Guidelines for his own diocese, the Diocese of Rome, which they claim admit divorced-remarried adulterers to Holy Communion and other such subsequent Guidelines, Guidelines that they claim are proof of the pope's intent to teach heresy by means of so-called "confusion, which they claim is stealthily woven into the fabric of *Amoris Laetitia*.

We have reviewed, studied, examined, and analyzed the document many times and not once have we spotted error or been confused, nor has Cardinal Mueller, the current Prefect for the CDF. After demonstrating its adherence to truth in the above linked article that shows in detail that *Amoris Laetitia* is firmly rooted in both Scripture and long-standing Tradition, after pointing this out, instead of gracefully admitting their error, radical proponents of traditionalism rather than admitting their error, deflect it. They continue their merciless onslaught by claiming that it is clear that "Bergoglio" stealthily planned to teach heresy as verified by his subsequent approval of mortal sin in various Bishop's Guidelines. **What was implicit in the document they claim, is explicit in the subsequent Guidelines.**

It is true, some of these Guidelines do contain moral error, error that is due to liberal interpretations that permit adulterous divorced-remarried couples to receive Holy Communion under certain conditions as in the Diocese of Malta.

The errors contained in these Guidelines have been blamed on the pope rather than on the bishops themselves. If some admit that the bishops are to blame, they then castigate the pope for purposefully causing “confusion” that has enabled such errors to be promulgated by some bishops. They fail, however, to realize that not only are several of their claims erroneous, (for example, that the Diocese of Rome Guidelines permit adulterers to receive Holy Communion) but that it is they, the accusers, who are the primary purveyors of the “confusion”, confusion that has enabled liberal-minded bishops to pursue their erroneous theology contrary to both scripture and tradition and the true intent of *Amoris Laetitia* wherein it is stated several times that its interpretation can neither “prescind from the Gospel” nor the constant tradition of the Catholic faith, including John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio*.

The more liberal minded bishops have been aided in their drafting and implementation of erroneous Guidelines by the barrage of mistrust and confusion engendered by the traditionalists. That is, if they had fallen in-line behind the pope, like Cardinal Mueller and other loyal bishops and Cardinals, if they had clarified the difference between dogmatic and pastoral theology and properly interpreted the document, they would have significantly reduced the ability to operate under the penumbra of confusion. That is, if there was unity by promoting clarity, there would be little disunity facilitated by claims of confusion spearheaded by a few radical traditionalists. If instead of confusion, they would have promoted unity, the liberal bishops would have little room to operate. As it is, [the traditionalist approach has provided their supposed liberal enemies, on the opposite end of the theological spectrum, a wide swathe for operation contrary to the wishes of the magisterium as expressed by Cardinal Mueller, Prefect of the CDF:](#)

“Adultery is always a mortal sin and the bishops who create

confusion about this must study the doctrine of the Church...Amoris Laetitia must "clearly be interpreted in the light of the whole doctrine of the Church. [...] It is not right that so many bishops are interpreting 'Amoris Laetitia' according to their way of understanding the Pope's teaching. This does not keep to the line of Catholic doctrine."

"The magisterium of the Pope is interpreted only by him or through the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The Pope interprets the bishops, it is not the bishops who interpret the Pope, this would constitute an inversion of the structure of the Catholic Church."

"To all those who are talking too much, I urge them to study first the doctrine on the papacy and the episcopate of the two Vatican Councils. ... The bishop, as teacher of the Word, must himself be the first to be well-formed so as not to fall into the risk of the blind leading the blind...The Church can never justify a situation which is not in accordance with the will of God."

Again, what are these acts of the pope that some traditionalists have adopted as a more advanced strategy to forward their contention that the pope is a heretic? These acts include the guidelines produced by the Bishops of Malta, the German Bishop's Conference, and especially the Bishops of Argentina and those of the Diocese of Rome, headed by the pope himself. It is claimed that in all these dioceses, church teaching about divorced and remarried couples living in adulterous relationships are being violated because in these dioceses divorced-remarried adulterers living in objective sin are being admitted to the sacraments.

While there is some truth to this statement; it is not true

that the pope is supporting these initiatives nor is it true that any of the accusations are even correct. **Neither the Argentine Bishops nor the Bishop of Rome permit access to the Eucharist by divorced-remarried people living in adultery as the traditionalists and their erstwhile allies have loudly and boldly proclaimed.** In other words, the traditionalists are wrong in every case, wrong when they say the pope is supporting liberal guidelines, and wrong when they say some guidelines teach heresy when in fact, they do not! Although some do teach herey, these are *not* supported by the pope; the ones that the pope does support such as the Argentine bishops and those of his own diocese hold to the truth about marriage contrary to what many traditionalists and other ideological outlets have reported. They are either ignorant themselves or hide behind a veil of obfuscation (exactly what they accuse the pope of doing) dependent on other's ignorance, subversion of facts, and regular mis-reading of documents as will be shown document by document in the following article.

1st Anniversary Flashback; Cardinal Burke Still Causing Confusion

[\(New Era World News](#) – Follow Up Tomorrow)

This article was written earlier in the year but serves as a flashback on this First Anniversary of the attempt to force Pope Francis to answer to his detractors. Newera is looking forward to releasing a provocative, demonstrative and current update on the issue tomorrow.

CARDINAL BURKE SEEMS TO HAVE TROUBLE letting go of an

issue that has already been settled. Earlier this year [Cardinal Mueller](#), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) stated that “There’s no problem with doctrine in ‘*Amoris Laetitia*’ (AL). The Cardinal also stated that:

“The document is “very clear” on doctrine, and that making the discussion public is harmful to the Church.”

Nonetheless, on the eve of March 24, 2017 Cardinal Raymond Burke, after several previous public cannonades, was still at it. If the pope is not good enough for him why should the highest doctrinal authority in the Church, beside the pope himself, mean anything to him either? Thus, on that Friday evening, Cardinal Burke presented a talk at [Saint Raymond of Peñafort](#) parish in Springfield, Virginia, during which he stated that “correction” by the Four Cardinals would be forthcoming if Pope Francis fails respond to the *dubia* presented to him by what might *in jest* be a dubious group of cardinals.

The pastor of the parish, Fr. John De Celles, asked about the *dubia*:

Fr. De Celles: There are a lot of rumors circulating about the dubia, which you and four other esteemed cardinals sent to the Holy Father about divorce, marriage, and communion and the like. Do you know if there will be a response to the dubia from our Holy Father or from the CDF?

*Cardinal Burke: I sincerely hope that there will be because these are fundamental questions that are honestly raised by the text of the apostolic...the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. And until these questions are answered, there continues to spread a very harmful confusion in the Church and one of the fundamental questions is in*

regards to the truth that there are some kinds that are always and everywhere wrong – what we call intrinsically evil acts – and so, we cardinals are, will continue to insist that we hear a response to these honest questions.”

Fr. De Celles: *If there is no response, will, what will your response be, the Four Cardinals?*

Cardinal Burke: *Then we simply will have to correct the situation, again, in a respectful way, that simply can say that, to draw the response to the questions from the constant teachings of the Church and to make that known for the good of souls.*

“In summary, [the five dubia suggest that “Amoris Laetitia” may have altered traditional Catholic teaching on the following matters:](#)”

- the indissolubility of the sacramental marriage bond;
- the existence of absolute moral norms prohibiting intrinsically evil acts;
- that one can find oneself in an objective situation of grave habitual sin by living in contradiction to a commandment of God’s law;
- that circumstances or intentions can never transform an intrinsically evil act into a subjectively good one or into a defensible choice;
- that there can be no “creative” role for conscience to authorize legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms.

According to the [Jesuit Review](#),

*“The dubia are not really expressions of doubt or questions but rather **assertions that “Amoris Laetitia” appears to have abandoned or altered key teachings of Catholic tradition, especially as they have been expressed most recently by St. John Paul II in his encyclical letter “Veritatis Splendor” (1993).***

This does appear to be the case. The key word is “*appears*”. After reading the document, we begin to wonder if the Cardinal has ever read the document; certain that he has, Newera analysts are left awestruck, did we read the same document?

We are left awestruck because after reading the document, nothing “*appeared*” contrary to the teachings of Catholic tradition. In fact, **Pope Francis strains to make it clear in numerous places throughout the document and esp. in the so-called “troublesome” Chapter Eight that nothing stated in AL about the discernment process that is integral to pastoral theology should be interpreted in such a way that contradicts the long held teaching of the Church on marriage nor may it be interpreted in such a way that prescind from the Gospel (para 297, 300, 307, 308, 311).** Did the Cardinals miss these statements?

To elucidate the point about Francis’ clarity, a chronological list of clarifying statements contained in the original document (Chapter Eight) is provided. To begin, according to the AL,

*“The Synod Fathers stated that, although the Church realizes that **any breach of the marriage bond “is against the will of God”** she is also “conscious of the frailty of many of her children” (para 291).*

Pope Francis begins the so-called difficult chapter by reaffirming the perennial truths of the faith pertaining to

the marriage bond and hints at the pastoral dimension that must be taken into account **while upholding the perennial truths, because, according to the pope “any breach of the marriage bond “is against the will of God.”** Moreover, the Church

“... constantly holds up the call to perfection and asks for a fuller response to God, “the Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children to enlighten those who have lost their way or who are in the midst of a storm” (para 291).

Again, he clearly states that the Church in addition to protecting the marriage bond from any breach, is also leading all of her children to “*perfection*“. Since all men and women are at a different place along the path that leads to God, the Church must meet them where they are at. As witnessed by St. Paul, she must “become all things to all men with the view of winning them to Christ” ([1 Cor 9:22](#)). If the Church and her ministers fail to do this, they will *not* bring anyone to Christ, which is their evangelical mission. She must be especially vigilant about those who have “lost their way”; Like her beloved spouse, Jesus Christ, His bride must leave the secure to seek out the lost but not in anyway that negates the truth about marriage as already clearly stated at the outset of the chapter.

“What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing: And coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance” ([Luke 15:4-7](#)).

Perhaps this pastoral approach taught by the Lord Himself, is too difficult for some who would rather wear medals and debate theological issues while drinking wine and smoking cigars or for another group, the so-called, "self righteous". While debating theology and enjoying a good cigar are wholesome activities, they are deficient if *not* followed by the difficult task of pastoral work, of seeking out, reassuring, and accompanying the lost while gently guiding them *after* touching their hearts with mercy and compassion rather than cold correction and instant rebuke, which, *more often than not*, turns them away. NO! This is not the way of Jesus Christ, nor is it the way of Pope Francis; anyone who thinks otherwise will have difficulty understanding *Amoris Laetitia*.

Francis continues:

*"The Fathers also considered the specific situation of a merely civil marriage or, with due distinction, even simple cohabitation, noting that "when such unions attain a particular stability, legally recognized, are characterized by deep affection and responsibility for their offspring, and demonstrate an ability to overcome trials, they can provide occasions for **pastoral care** with a view to the **eventual** celebration of the sacrament of marriage" (para 293).*

Notice that Francis indicates that when civilly married people or even those in "simple cohabitation" have a relationship that is "stable" and are characterized by "deep affection" and "responsibility for their offspring" they can provide an "occasion for pastoral care", not for the sacraments *but* for pastoral care (that might lead to the sacraments). In other words, divorced-remarried couples who are acting maturely and give signs that they might want to mature in the faith should be approached; they should be approached however, not to introduce them to the Sacraments, but with a view of giving them pastoral care that might lead to "*eventual celebration of marriage*". In other words, these people are to be met and

encountered, **not to condone their sin, but to bring them to a deeper relationship with Christ and eventually to Christian marriage.** This seems very clear, and it sets the tone for the remainder of the so-called difficult chapter.

To provide further clarity Francis remarks:

“In this pastoral discernment, there is a need “to identify elements that can foster evangelization and human and spiritual growth”.

In other words, the pastor is *not* to make excuses and look past sins or worse, to condone them; rather, he is to identify elements that can foster evangelization; that is look for positive behaviors that he can build upon while gently correcting them and leading them to deeper communion with Christ and with each other. Clearly, if they need “spiritual growth,” they must be doing something wrong!

It is the pope’s desire to lead such people from a sinful to a sanctified relationship:

“We know that there is “a continual increase in the number of those who, after having lived together for a long period, request the celebration of marriage in Church.”

A pastor will meet a broad variety of cases; however, according to Pope Francis,

*“Whatever the case, “all these situations require a constructive response seeking to **transform them into opportunities that can lead to the full reality of marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel.**”*

Did Cardinal Burke miss this? Whatever the case, these relationships “require” “transformation.” They are “opportunities” that can lead to marriage in “CONFORMITY WITH

THE GOSPEL". This is the second time the pope has mentioned the need to conform to the Gospel. He is concerned that the Church reinstate sinners in some way possible, in some way that will lead to fuller participation and *eventual* reception of the sacraments. He does *not* want to cast sinners away like the New England Puritans did, but to embrace them and win them over as Christ did. He wants to do this **not be excusing their sins but by acknowledging their sins and also acknowledging anything good in their relationship and building upon it.**

He makes this point about excusing sin clear (para 297):

"Naturally, if someone flaunts an objective sin as if it were part of the Christian ideal (radical homosexual who argues God made him this way), or wants to impose something other than what the Church teaches (for example civil-remarriage), he or she can in no way presume to teach or preach to others; this is a case of something which separates from the community" (cf. Mt 18:17).

Again, clearly, anyone who teaches that objective sins are licit cannot be a teacher or a preacher; **this is a case of "something which separates from the community"**. Can it get any clearer than this? Although good pastors will look for ways to accompany their parishioners, *esp.* sinful ones always with an eye to something to build upon as mentioned above, *no one can excuse objective sin and the flaunting of it.* **This is NOT acceptable and Francis is straightforward about the matter.**

He then points out at the end of para 297 that **people who have contracted civil marriage**, who are divorced and remarried or simply living together **are living wrongly**, are NOT living up to God's expectations. Therefore he says that they need help to "*understand the divine pedagogy of grace*" and the need "*assistance so that they can reach the fullness of God's plan*

for them” because obviously **their living arrangement is not up to God’s plan!**

In para 298 he reiterates:

“It must remain clear that this is not the ideal which the Gospel proposes for marriage and the family.”

Nonetheless,

*“Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and **encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel.**”*

Obviously, if they need to be encouraged along the path of the Gospel, they are failing; nonetheless, they should be incorporated into the community, somehow, and encouraged to grow like the rest of the sinners who occupy the pews.

Pope Francis does NOT indicate that priests should accept divorced and remarried people into the community and then forget their sinful state.

*“Priests have the duty to “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation **according to the teaching of the Church** and the guidelines of the bishop” (para 300).*

These couple must be “accompanied” so that they can be “helped”, helped to understand why **their relationship precludes them for receiving Holy Communion “according to the teaching of the Church.”** The pope does *not* say they may be excused by some aberrant pastoral excuse, but he does say they must be developed according to the TEACHING of the CHURCH. For those who want to argue that the additional clause and

“guidelines of the bishops” permits admission to Holy Communion; it is simply responded that those guidelines must also be consistent with the teaching of the Church as [Cardinal Muller, Prefect of the CDF is now making clear](#). Aberrant liberal bishops will have to be corrected if their guidelines run contrary to the teaching of the Church, that is the job of the CDF.

For Cardinal Burke to act as if confusion is something new, because some bishops are permitting civilly remarried people *etc.* to receive Holy Communion, is surprising. Aberrant bishops have caused confusion for 2,000 years. THIS IS NOTHING NEW. Catholics have seen this type of abuse even with an Ecumenical Council, why should supposed confusion of a Post-Synodal Exhortation cause any surprise? In fact, confusion is being exacerbated by prelates like Cardinal Burke who keep insisting there is massive confusion where there would be little to none if they would “zip it.” Liberal aberrant bishops will open the door to sin no matter what they are told; a key ingredient to their success is supposed “confusion”.

You are reading a review of Chapter Eight. Do you honestly see any confusion so far? Cardinal Burke is helping manufacture confusion, perhaps due to a failure to synthesize dogmatic and pastoral theology. This happens to many people, *esp.* learned ones who spend too much time in their heads and have failed to integrate their minds with their hearts, wisdom with mercy and compassion. If the eminent cardinal had closed ranks behind the pope and interpreted the document as a pastoral exhortation that holds the objective truth about marriage in tact, as it does, aberrant bishops would have less room to operate; Cardinal Burke is opening the doors wide to deviance by continually advancing the theme of confusion.

After saying that divorced and remarried couples should be helped to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church, the pope further drives home the divorced-

remarried couple's error by calling them to an "examination of conscience" followed by "*repentance*" (para 300). **Why a call to penance if not a presumption that they are sinning?** Again, crystal clear!

Clearly, such people cannot be admitted to Holy Communion because according to (para 300), they need to form a "*correct judgement*" of their situation. Until they do so and repent, they are, according to the pope, "*hindered*" from "*the possibility of fuller participation in the life of the Church*". While guiding an aberrant couple to discern the state of their relationship before God, **no priest is licitly permitted to admit them to the sacraments.** To make the point abundantly clear, Pope Francis states (para 300):

"This discernment can NEVER PRESCIND FROM THE GOSPEL DEMANDS OF TRUTH and CHARITY AS PROPOSED BY THE CHURCH."

Did Cardinal Burke just happen to miss this too, perhaps one of the more powerful statements in AL?

Francis' loyalty to the Magisterium, to the Gospels and Tradition become even clearer as he limits the parameters involved to even qualify a couple as candidates for the whole the process of discernment:

"For this discernment to happen, the following conditions must necessarily be present: humility, discretion and love for the Church and her teaching, in a sincere search for God's will and a desire to make a more perfect response to it" (para 300).

In other words, the very possibility of beginning dialogue between pastor and parishioner, dialogue that is intended to place persons on the path of sanctification that *might* lead to the sacraments *if* they do things correctly; the very possibility of this dialogue is contingent upon persons

being, "humble", having "love for the Church" and "her teaching"; it is further contingent upon the couple's having a "sincere search for God's will" and a willingness to respond "more perfectly" to it. If these qualifying marks are missing, discernment leading to the sacraments cannot even begin; at least this is what the pope states; do you read something else? What did Cardinal Burke read?

Pope Francis drives this requirement home by stating that these attitudes are "*essential*" (para 300). They are essential to "avoid misunderstanding" and the "grave danger" that might lead a priest to think that he can grant "exceptions" (para 300). Thus, any priest thinking that pastoral theology dispenses him from the constant teaching of the Church in these matters is not only "misunderstanding" what the pope is teaching and what the Church teaches, he is also involving himself and his parishioners in "grave danger".

Some how Cardinal Burke seems to think that Pope Francis is excusing sin due to ignorance or any number of particular and contingent circumstances. This is patently false. ***Nowhere does Pope Francis say ignorance outright excuses***; what he does say is that ***ignorance "mitigates"***. In fact, this is the title of the next section of the Exhortation:

"Mitigating Factors in Pastoral Discernment"

Pope Francis begins this section by making the simple moral point, simple for anyone educated in moral theology, that even sinners can experience grace, at least *prevenient grace* that leads them to the sacraments. He even states that "More is involved than mere ignorance" (para 301).

When reading this section, the reader must *not* do as some Protestant Divines do, that is cherry-pick or fail to read the document as a systematic whole, fail to remember everything that was clearly stated previously. At this point, the

document moves from *dogmatic* or *speculative theology* into the the more difficult realm of *moral casuistry* or *practical-pastoral theology*, the point where the rubber meets the road so to speak, the point where theory must be applied to practice. Thus, **at this point it necessarily becomes more obtuse**. The obtuseness of the exercise should be expected by anyone with a background in either moral theology or moral philosophy, even a pagan like Aristotle understood the difference; he also taught that the second part, that is the practical part, is the more difficult of the two – this is the simple reason why the document grows more difficult at this point; however, it must not be forgotten that **Francis has already stated at least twice, that a valid interpretation of AL cannot prescind from the Gospel or teaching of the Church**.

Again, throughout this section, the pope speaks about **mitigating circumstances**; he does *not* excuse objective sin, but stresses subjective mitigating circumstances due to the nature of a faulty or malformed conscience, a malformed conscience that is supposed to be corrected in the process of “accompaniment” by the pastor explained in the previous section. As regards mitigating circumstances due to subjective states, we find Jesus, Himself, clearly teaching this in the Gospels:

“And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes”
([Luke 12:47-48](#)).

Jesus position is clearly that of His Vicar. Persons who are invincibly ignorant of the truth, or for any other valid reason fail to comprehend it, reasons such as socialization, psychological immaturity, psychological manipulation by association etc, such persons who commit sins despite their ignorance etc are still guilty of an objective wrong; however,

the subjective moral culpability is lessened; how much it is lessened depends on the circumstances which only God alone is master of, a fact that led Francis to once say, "who am I to judge?" Only God and perhaps the person himself can judge such things; it is the job of the pastor to enter into a relationship to better grasp the subjective state of his parishioners.

Without this approach, without such a relationship, the whole process of discernment breaks down and all that is left is a black and white judgement based upon objective facts of dogmatic theology; this is what it means to be dogmatic, or closed minded, closed to deeper truths about the *acting person*, deeper truths that affect their relationship to their sin and his or her moral culpability. These are facts, necessary facts for the successful process of pastoring souls entrusted to a priest's care. Cardinal Burke seems oblivious to such facts; he prefers to make everything black and white. In this, he is acting more like a judgemental pharisee than a "good shepherd serving his people in the image of Jesus Christ who gave his life for his sheep, a good shepeherd who knows them well enough to call them each by name ([John 10:3](#)).

Again, to make his point clear, Francis states that

"In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage."

"A lukewarm attitude, any kind of relativism, or an undue reticence in proposing that ideal, would be a lack of fidelity to the Gospel and also of love on the part of the Church for young people themselves. To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being" (para 307).

It is hard to see how Cardinal Burke missed this along with the score of other similar clear pronouncements throughout the Chapter made by Pope Francis. The pope emphatically stresses the point that he wants to “avoid all misunderstanding”. To do so he *again* states that what he is teaching in no way desists from the “full idea of marriage.” Moreover, he anathematizes “*relativism*” and “*undue reticence*” to the “*full ideal of marriage.*” *Again* he states, that contingent circumstance, that pastoral understanding, compassion *etc*, “**never imply dimming the light to the fuller ideal (to the fullness of truth) or proposing less**” than Jesus taught.

The Church, he says is

*“...a Mother who, while clearly expressing her **objective teaching**, “always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street” (that is in the pasture where her ministers must encounter the dirt of sinners lives) (para308).*

Again, he states, again and again, that the Church must hold to her “objective teaching”

Pope Francis closes the so-called difficult chapter by restating one more time the commitment to objective truth; however, he teaches that there is one thing greater than the truth, that is love, the summit of Christ’s teaching and of His life; it was love that sent Him to the cross and love that redeemed the world (“[Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends](#)”). No one sent Jesus to the cross; He freely chose the path of salvific suffering, and He chose out of love for sinful humanity. This is the central point Francis wants to make and indeed does make. It is difficult to comprehend how Prelates like Cardinal Burke miss it?

*“Although it is quite true that concern must be shown for the integrity of the Church’s moral teaching, special care should **always** be shown to emphasize and encourage the highest and*

most central values of the Gospel, particularly the primacy of charity as a response to the completely gratuitous offer of God's love.

*" It is true, for example, that **mercy does not exclude justice and truth**, but first and foremost we have to say that **mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth.**"*

In this Francis is seconded by the Sacred Scriptures:

'If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

*And now there remain faith (from which wisdom grows), hope, and charity, these three: but **the greatest of these is charity**" ([1 Cor. 13:1-13](#)).*

Equally impressive is the story of Jesus' dialogue with the rich young man ([Matt 19:16-22](#)). Jesus does *not* simply announce the truth and leave the young man to accept it or reject it. Rather, Jesus engages in a process to bring the young man forward. "Jesus, as a good shepherd, personally leads the young man step by step to the truth

Francis, like Jesus, insists upon two unique but integral aspects of evangelization: First is the proclamation of truth and then the gradual formation of people to internalize and

live it. Thus, when the *Pharisees* (dogmatic theologians – men without mercy- [Matt 9:13](#)) questioned Jesus about divorce ([Matt 19:3-9](#)), He communicated the objective facts; He proclaimed the truth: Marriage is indissoluble and exclusive. However, when he interacted with the *Samaritan woman*, He placed less emphasis on the truth and *more* on her personal life journey, a journey that involved her with six men. After engaging her, He told her,

“Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered, and said: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: Thou hast said well, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly” ([John 4: 16-18](#)).

Jesus does not break the conversation, but engages her until she (and then many others) finally accepts Him as the Messiah ([John 4:38-42](#)):

“Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in him, for the word of the woman giving testimony: He told me all things whatsoever I have done? So when the Samaritans were come to him, they desired that he would tarry there. And he abode there two days. And many more believed in him because of his own word. And they said to the woman: We now believe, not for thy saying: for we ourselves have heard him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

See what truth in the context of a little encounter and dialogue can do? Pope Francis is exemplifying these two aspects of evangelization, the need to hold to the truth that never “prescinds from the Gospel” and the more difficult process of discernment and engagement whereby alienated people are gradually led , step by step, to communion so that they can eventually be one with Him who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

FOLLOWUP ARTICLE TO FOLLOW TOMORROW